ENDICOTT AND I



WARNER

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ENDICOTT AND I



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BY

FRANCES LESTER WARNER



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To my father
the Endicott of these papers
and to my mother
whose rôle as narrator I have ventured
to assume

NOTE

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ENDICOTT AND I

I

ENDICOTT AND I CONDUCT AN ORCHESTRA



HEN two people conduct an orchestra, there is plot material. If the two are knit by marriage ties, the plot thickens. Endicott and I conduct a family orchestra, he at the piano, I playing second violin. I know more about music than does Endicott; he is more musical than I. I keep the time; he has the temperament. Temperament is more noble than time, but time, I shall always insist, has its place, perhaps nowhere

more appropriately than in an orchestra. He, at the piano, can dominate the situation more neatly than I. In my position among the strings, however, I can more readily organize a strike.

The rest of the "pieces" are presided over by our children, young people of inflexible spirit and chromatic moods. Sometimes we doubt whether we have our troupe under the rigid control which, as parents, we might expect to command. The conductivity of an orchestra, says our son Geoffrey, varies with the distance of the blood-relationship between artists and conductor. When the children were little, we held the pleasant theory that a family orchestra would draw us all close together,

standing always as a symbol of our perfect harmony. That would be all right if the harmony would only go to suit us all equally at the same time. As it is, our little band, in which observers find so touching a picture of hearthside unity, suggests sometimes all the elements of guerrilla warfare.

The question most likely to strain diplomatic relations is the choice of what to play. This is complicated by the fact that we each judge music by a different norm. Geoffrey, for instance, begs us not to play anything where the cornet has to rest too much. He says that he cannot keep track of a rest of more than forty-seven measures and be absolutely sure of coming in again at the right place.

Every one admits that it is unfortunate when Geoffrey comes in at the wrong place. There is no smoothing over the astonishing effect of his premature trumpeting. "You cannot," says Geoffrey, "do the dumb shuffle on the cornet." For his sake, therefore, in looking over new music, we examine the cornet part for rests before we buy.

Endicott, a quorum in himself, agrees to anything except five sharps. Once seated upon the long piano bench, he is the genial patriarch at home. The girls, gracefully in league, object to extremes of any kind. They are our star performers, and must be humored at any cost. Knowing that the first violin and the 'cello are too valuable for us to lose, they exercise

a cool and shameless power of veto at every turn.

I myself admire extremes. My tastes are catholic, and my choices range all the way from the "Unfinished Symphony" to "The Swing," by Sudds. The one thing in all the world that I really will not play is Schumann's "Warum," a favorite with the first violin. This worthy composition leaves me undone for days. Its insane, insistent question slides through my mind, over and over. I will not play it. I will not think about it. I will not even explain my antipathy. I have hidden the music.

Probably the assembling of an orchestra is, to the audience, a conventional and colorless affair enough.

Any players of chamber music, however, who have been confined to a space that housed as many other things as does our living-room, know better. After bringing in enough dining-room chairs to seat the players, and adjusting the cross-legged music-stands, we find ourselves a little short of room. We have as yet been unable to find a type of music-stand which will not trip up long-limbed cornetists off their guard. One evening when Geoffrey, threading his way to his seat, really did lose his balance, and plunged headlong into my work-basket, one foot in the fireplace and the other still entangled in Barbara's music-stand, affairs rose to a climax.

"Everybody more than a mile high please leave the room," said Barbara,

leaning over her 'cello and unweaving the legs of the stand from among her brother's feet. Any quotation from "Alice in Wonderland" is always calculated to infuriate the men of our family, and Endicott turned at once to his son's support.

"I don't see," said Endicott, "why Barbara does n't arrange some little device for her music, just as Margaret does. Those tin spider-legs are really dangerous."

Margaret's "device" is at least not dangerous. She always pins her music to the tomato pin-cushion on the mantel, and stands aloof, compactly.

Once comfortably settled, we tune. That is one thing that we all will do. Ever since the children began to learn, when even the baby would

bring his harmonica and say "Give me *M*," they have always played to pitch. For this fact, Endicott is not responsible. In the most critical attuning of our strings, Endicott will cease his obvious business of giving us "A," and will break into little improvised arpeggios and fanfares, incorrigibly. Why pianists do this will never fully appear. After the best disciplinary training that accompanist ever had, Endicott still continues to "practice his part" while the rest of us are tuning our fifths.

From my position in the orchestra, I can see the whole group reflected in the mirror over the fireplace. This helps me to conduct, and it also gives me pleasure. Barbara's 'cello is the most picturesque of all our instru-

ments. I find something very lovable about the long, vibrant strings, and the gracious curves of its worn, dark form. A 'cello is big enough so that you can embrace it and treat it as an equal, — big enough to satisfy your love for layer on layer of velvet tone. And Geoffrey is the most picturesque of all our players. There may be men who can play a cornet with a perfectly natural cast of countenance, concealing their attention to a proper "lip" under a nonchalant expression. There is nothing nonchalant about Geoffrey's lean cheek and beetling brows. His eyes are purposeful and all his hair erect. His incalculable legs are far astray, and the very angle of his elbows has a look of do or die. Margaret, on tiptoe before her

tomato pin-cushion, is perhaps not wholly at one with the group. One evening she turned briskly about, waved her violin like a brakeman's flag, and announced that somebody was out, and we 'd better begin at "K."

"It was old Meggie herself," said Geoffrey fraternally. "Everybody 's out of step but Meggie."

Does every amateur orchestra, I wonder, when trying new music, interrupt itself sometimes for the tentative inquiry, "Are we all at 'J'?" Now and then we have an uneasy feeling that we all are *not* at "J," and a general assurance that we are lends confidence. Another amateur pleasure of ours is in taking liberties with repeat signs. If we like the passage

extremely, we mind the repeat; if we are not acutely stirred, we take the second ending. With new music, we have no way of knowing beforehand what we shall especially admire. It chances, accordingly, that the cornet and the 'cello perhaps shout in the same breath, "Repeat!" and "Don't repeat!" respectively. At such moments, it is impossible to keep the orchestra together, even with two conductors. We usually stop and have a family consultation as to who is conducting this band, anyway.

Orders of the kind just mentioned, shouted into the middle of the music, are likely to sound abrupt, not to say savage. When you have a violin beneath your chin, and a melody

beneath your bow, you simply cannot converse in human tones, no matter how mild your mood. There is a certain tenseness about your voice, a dictatorial crispness about your brief request, that is likely to sound domineering. Margaret and Geoffrey, one evening, almost became permanently estranged because Geoffrey in the midst of a lovely passage took the mouthpiece of his cornet from his lips long enough to roar, "Three flats! Three flats!" for her guidance. Such stage-directions have a brusque and startling tone, as if the speaker had stood all he could from you, up to the explosion point, and must now relieve his mind. Then too, there is of course a subtle excitement about the playing that ap-

proaches the danger mark if anything happens to spoil the spell. Little things seem vital in such moods.

But I think that the part we shall all remember is something more difficult to describe. Sometimes, of a witching night, when we all are keyed for the music, and outside circumstances behave in normal fashion, there comes an experience worth all the years of scratchy scales that went before. We are in the midst of the Larghetto, in the "Second Symphony," perhaps. I am not conducting. Neither is Endicott. Perhaps Beethoven prefers to conduct the Larghetto himself. And then, suddenly, as one sometimes on a journey becomes vividly aware of a breeze and blue distance, and firm hills be-

neath his feet, I really hear the chord that we are playing. It is no longer a measured flow of mingled sound, but distinct, exquisite, richly personal to me. There is the queer little rush of the accent that comes from the first violin when Margaret is really stirred; the 'cello's full response, vibrant, but soft with hidden masses of covered tone. I can feel my own little second fiddle quivering beneath my bow. There is some curious connecting of the spirit in the playing of a chord. Again and again we find it. Probably these moments are what we live for, varied though our programmes always are. In our cabinet are certain ragged folios that we try not to play too often. They live in promiscuous company: "Peer Gynt"

and the "Edinburgh Quadrille"; Massenet and MacDowell; "The Red Mill"; Liszt and Bach; "The Toy Symphony" and Schumann's "Liebesgarten"—each of these has its time. Our only question is, "What next?"

At times when we have been ambitious all the evening, and Geoffrey's lip is tired, we hunt up one of the songs arranged for voice and orchestra. The "Shoogy Shoo" is one of these. Endicott then, in generous baritone, sings as he will, and the rest of us, with mutes astride our bridges, follow on. I shall not hear that song without the picture of the group in the mirror: Endicott upon the old red piano-bench, his hair silver under the lamplight, his mood transformed. He is no longer the

down-trodden accompanist, to whom a measure is restraint, but the untrammeled artist creating his own rhythms. What is a measure or two among friends? Then I watch the girls, now wholly at ease, their bows moving softly, their eyes upon their muted strings. Geoffrey listens with his cornet on his knee.

After all, though music that we long to play is far beyond us, though we cannot always find all the parts, no matter how many times we search the piles; though the telephone rings and the heater blows off steam — these all are only passing discords. Some sort of music is always ready, alluring: Mr. Strauss for times of enterprise, with all our reckless hearts; the "Shoogy Shoo" for mo-

ments when strings have snapped; ancient hymns at twilight of a Sunday evening, with Endicott to sing, and now and then a guest with a fiddle of his own. After such evenings as these are over, when the children are putting away the instruments and folding the stands, and I go about locking up the house for the night, I think that I do not greatly care who really conducts that orchestra—Endicott or I.

II

ENDICOTT AND I GO SKETCHING



SKETCH," said Endicott, "is not only a memorandum; it is a revelation."

That was in my early days of experience with Endicott, when we were making the final preparations for our wedding trip. He took me into the stationer's and bought two sketch-books.

"But I can't draw," I objected.

"Neither can I," said Endicott benignly, and pocketed the books.

Little by little, as I was able to grasp it, he unfolded to me the theory by which he governed his art. He

began by saying that every civilized being should habitually keep a sketch-book wherein to jot down his vision of the world. This drawing should, moreover, be done naturally, never with one eye out for critics. How else are we to originate a distinctive and progressive manner? We should draw what we see.

At first I was inclined to be contentious. That was before I had seen Endicott's manner.

"When *I* draw things," said I, "they never turn out to look like what I see."

"It doesn't matter what it *looks* like," assented Endicott. "If you *draw* the thing as you see it, every stroke of the pencil is a shorthand symbol. Years afterward, one glance

at the sketch brings it all back to you, though probably to no one else. The act of making the marks shows you the scene in a new light, and the sketch preserves it."

In this way the Futurist doctrine in its rudiments was proclaimed a generation ahead of time by a minor prophet. I longed wistfully to be as versatile as Endicott.

The first time we were alone for a peaceful afternoon together after the bustle of the wedding and departure, he produced the sketch-books and passed one to me. We were sitting near the bluffs at Montauk, and at our feet the low-tide breakers, full of shell and seaweed and green light, were rolling endlessly. I am always hypnotized by surf. At that particu-

lar moment I was helping the tide to turn, an anxious habit which I outgrew only after days of conscientious attention to the waves. I did not want to sketch. Who can sketch and see the tide home both at once? I surmised, however, that Endicott might not understand my rôle as chaperon to the tide, and I politely accepted his best pencil.

I had done just enough drawing in my youth to know a few principles and to shrink from practice. With a helpless feeling I looked up toward the bluffs, deciding that they, with their bold and stable outlines, were the safest subject in sight. Endicott, at a little distance, began to sketch busily, and I realized that for the first time in my life I was sitting for a

portrait. There was exhilaration in the thought that I was about to see how I really looked to Endicott. For him, he announced graciously, there was only one object on that beach.

Finally, just as I had begun desperately to block in my sketch, Endicott rose.

"Now I dare say that nobody else would consider this a good portrait," he began, "but I shall never look at it without seeing you just as you are now."

All this happened many years ago, when I was young and proud of spirit. The shade-hats that year were at their sweetest, and mine was an effective thing of white lilacs and silver-green and white. My dress was soft and graceful, and my boots were

notably trim. Just how much of this, I wondered as I looked at the sketch, had really been wasted upon Endicott? I think that I blushed, but I



know that I did not laugh. Endicott's theory of a sketch as a revelation was too serious a matter. There was, moreover, a certain virile flourish about the artist's signature which bespoke finality. "E. M. A. pinxit." This was his changeless hall-mark upon completed works. What was I to quarrel with an early Futurist about details of chin and waist-line

and coiffure? Of course, if Endicott saw it that way—!

Through the weeks that followed, each companionable adventure was celebrated by a sketch. My own efforts were touchingly conscientious. "You keep trying to draw as you ought to," sighed Endicott hopelessly, glancing through my neat diagrams of headland and farmhouse and wall. Try as I might, I could never learn the secret which chartered my companion's genius. Memorable among his landscapes was his sunset view of "Conklin's-by-the-Sea." All these years our children have admired the Conklin ducks, skillfully arranged with inspired perspective so that the fowls nearest the observer were ostrich-like in propor-

tions, growing smaller and smaller as the procession neared the house, until those by the door appeared scarcely larger than the landlady herself.

Surreptitiously, Endicott portrayed "Old Grumbler," our one fellow-boarder, an Englishman with pipe and sun-hat, reminiscent of Kipling and India. I have always been more deeply impressed by Endicott's character interpretations than by his studies from still life, remarkable as they often turn out to be.



"My Cousin Abby does n't like to have me sketch," mused Endicott one afternoon, putting the finishing

touches to a freshly drawn cartoon of a casual wayfarer who had just put in a mysterious appearance at Conklin's, "but I intend to keep just such a book as this through all our vacations to come."

He did. There is an entire volume of Watch Hill scenes, where the seaside chapel furnished a favorite model. There is one sketch of the interior of this chapel — where the officiating rector preaches forever unheard, while the beholder's attention is divided between the curious texts upon the chapel walls and the still more curious-looking dog that barks savagely in penciled balloons just outside the place of prayer. A later book contains Block Island sketches, including one of "Camp As You Like It," where

the grazing horse appears to range unbridled in the sky; and a "study from life," where I am apparently sliding down the face of South Cliff,



while our eldest daughter in her baby-carriage coasts miraculously alongside.

Cousin Abby, as had been predicted, cordially disapproved. She is an artist, and had been a convenient crony of Endicott's in his law-school days. During her occasional visits to

our home, as years went on, I noted her unchastened way of commenting with open sarcasm upon Endicott's various convictions, but I never heard what Cousin Abby could do in the cause of righteousness until one day she found one of the children's sketch-books lying open on the table. Endicott, completely discouraged with me, had provided a complete set of sketching-books for his children and had pointed them each the path to freedom. Barbara was the only one that took to freedom. The others steadfastly consulted models. Their favorite pattern was the one sketch in their father's book that was flatly conventional. That sketch was made upon one of our flying trips through Easthampton, the village

of many windmills. Endicott announced his intention of rising before time for our early train to sketch one of the windmills on the bluff. At sunrise, however, he felt less enterprising, and, noticing that there were windmills on the wall-paper, he easefully copied one of these instead. In conspicuous exception to his usual fervid manner, this sketch has served as a copy for one after another of the toiling children; but not for Barbara. One thrilled glance through the Montauk sketch-book, and Barbara was off after ducks and fence-rails and a horizon of her own. No wall-paper windmills for her!

It happened to be Barbara's book that Cousin Abby found. She took it to Endicott. She took it seriously.

"It doesn't so much matter about you," she began in a tone of dry decision, "but it is wrong to let Barbara do so. Look at the pattern of that parlor lamp in the window of that house! Look at the shingles on that barn, and the black spots on those tiger-lilies. Notice the leaves on that rosebush!"

"Barbara saw them," said Endicott.

"But she should n't draw them!" Cousin Abby turned suddenly from the conflict. Not debate, but action was her specialty. She led the adoring Barbara through a perfect paradise of light and shade; of doorsteps that stood out nobly from the verandas of the houses; of long, tapering roads ending beautifully in a point among the trees; and of lonely sky-lines,

with one dim ridge of hills to mark the sunset. She gave her a box of water-colors and talked about flat washes and composition. Cruelly she spoiled Barbara's joy in depicting the sun's rays. Barbara had hitherto used the same general plan for the sun as for a many-footed spider. After Cousin Abby's visit she felt a little shy about her sunrises, her high noons, and her sunsets. She often left the sun to shine from a point just off the margin of the paper. Cousin Abby, however, could not be expected to forestall every possibility. Barbara still drew the moon with eyes and nose and mouth.

Expert opinion, decidedly expressed, carries a great deal of weight with me. Was Barbara indeed a child

of promise, led deliberately into sin? Endicott was unmoved. He said that the reason why so few people draw naturally is because there are so many Cousins Abby in the world. He held that it was time for some hardy souls to rise and insist that they *do* see the flower-pots in the window, and the cat on the ridge-pole, and the honey-bee coming a long way off. Who cares for a gray monotone of homestead wall on which one may paint no lichens at all, and the trumpet-vine only as a green puddle on the roof? He was glad that Barbara, in her seashore sketch, had made her sister the dominant note in the landscape. What matter if Margaret, passant, did obscure the sky-line and tower above the sailing-yacht

at her elbow? It was pleasant to reflect that she was more to Barbara than all of these.

Gradually, however, Endicott came to see that with Barbara the damage had already been done. Sophisticated now, she could never again fully enter the realm of the unspoiled amateur. Her trees, of old so strongly built that orioles and fly-catchers lodged in their branches, nests and all, were now leafless blurs of misty green; and over her houses grew vague tracery of vines without a bud or flower, unvisited by any humming-bird or wandering dragon-fly. That was proof.

We compromised. Endicott, though still laying by a supply of sketch-books for himself, gave me a camera,

and engaged a drawing teacher for Barbara. Thoughtfully he watched the work of many artists for adequate paintings of surf and windy shores. Upon our walls hangs one of these, a painting of Montauk breakers, with all their surge and foam and changeful light. I love the stately picture, but where are the frightened little sandpipers that were always hurrying along the shore?

To-day, feeling homesick for old times, I gather up the little heap of sketching-books and glance them through again. Sea wind and flowing tide and comfortable memories. I wonder if the windmill is still there? And "Josiah Peckham, His House" — is it still upon the sand? Here indeed are all the little intimate signs of life,

the shorthand notes of all our memories; even the ducks and flying gulls and fisher-nets offshore. When Endicott went sketching he saw these.



III

ENDICOTT AND I CONDUCT FAMILY PRAYERS



NDICOTT is a born patriarch. Thirty years ago, when we were setting up our first household arrangements, when I was chiefly occupied in placing the furniture and putting away my wedding silver, Endicott discussed with me the erection of a family altar. As I look back upon it now, I confess that we felt an unwarranted complacency at the ease with which we observed the custom of daily prayers. We did not see why every family should not do it. It seemed a fitting close to every new

day, this quiet moment of reading and prayer as we sat together before the fireplace. We realized that it safeguarded our companionship as few other things could have done. A married couple cannot maintain a strained relation and family prayers both at the same time. We knew that the custom gave balance and tone to our somewhat spirited early years together. It seemed, moreover, natural and easy to arrange.

Now, after the lapse of three decades, the custom remains unbroken; and it is once more the calm and simple matter that it was at first. In the intervening years, however, its history has been that of the Church Militant, at times in danger. Most mothers, I suppose, reckon their fam-

ily annals from certain significant changes that marked the growth of the family group. Some would date events from necessary changes in the arrangement of the house; some from periods of illness in the family; some from various experiments in the children's education. The most significant gauge of our own family's progress toward civilization, however, would be the varying methods, spirit, and times of day that we have tried for family prayers.

If all the children had been like Margaret, the upheavals would not have been so marked. The only change that she caused was a shift in the hour of devotions. To accommodate her early programme, we stopped our evening prayers, and arranged to

have morning worship among her earliest impressions. She was a thoughtful, religious little baby, and sat contentedly in my lap while we read and sang the hymn. But the other children were interested in no godly thing. My most ambitious aim was to keep them in any sort of quiet until the service was over. This did not satisfy Endicott. He missed the spirit of true devotion; he wanted not only good order, but worship in spirit and in truth. And true devoutness dwelt not in the spirit of Barbara nor of Geoffrey.

Barbara spoke familiarly of our morning worship as "the meetin'." She had a penchant for bringing things to the meeting—things intended to be used as supplementary

hand-work while the service went on. She communicated adroitly with Geoffrey during the prayer. She corrupted the well-trained Margaret into timing the exercises accurately, with careful eye on the clock. She stipulated that the meeting should be not more than five minutes long. We were worried about Barbara.

We finally decided that we must adapt ourselves somewhat to her habit of thought, since she was in no degree ready to adapt herself to ours. Although Barbara was not spiritually minded, at least we knew that she was intellectual. We planned, therefore, to change the spirit of our "meeting" from the worshipful to the educational. Barbara might not be able to listen receptively to a passage

of Scripture, but she could memorize one with finish and dispatch. She could, moreover, fire Margaret and Geoffrey to similar deeds. We were startled at their progress. We began with detached verses which we repeated every morning until they became familiar. Then, with a quickness which seemed uncanny to our more laborious mature minds, the children learned chapter after chapter with no apparent effort. Barbara, we learned, held private exercises for review between times upon the front stairs for a rostrum, until one day she was conducting a hymn so vigorously that she fell the length of the flight, baton and hymnal in hand.

Endicott's chief anxiety now fixed upon Barbara's debonair manner of

mispronouncing the Biblical terms. She especially clung to her formula, "Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Ax." One morning it became her portion to recite the books of the New Testament. She gave Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, and stopped, unaccountably. Prompting was against Endicott's principles. With careful suggestions he tried to stir his legal-minded descendant to think of the next book. But nothing stirred the mind of Barbara.

Endicott at last resorted to a desperate measure. "What do you chop wood with?" asked Endicott.

Light broke. Barbara's face was radiant. "Hammer!" said Barbara, and went on to Romans and Corinthians unchallenged.

Endicott sometimes questioned our wisdom in converting our quiet time of prayer and meditation into this sort of memory drill. We discussed possible ways of restoring some of the old-time spirit of beauty to the ceremony.

"Would it help if we knelt for the prayer?" queried Endicott. We tried this experiment one morning when Geoffrey had just recovered from a rather serious childish ailment. All of us were feeling deeply, and the little additional ceremony seemed appropriate and sincere. Endicott, however, on that particular Sunday morning, was robed in a certain dressing-gown of a cut which dated from his riotous law-school days. Its folds settled comfortably and volumi-

nously about his figure, in lines more classic than conventional. After the prayer was over, the infant Geoffrey chuckled happily. "You ought to have seen how funny Papa looked all cuddled down that way," said Geoffrey. Thereafter we always maintained an upright Congregational attitude during the prayer.

As the children grew older and the family life more complex, the meeting was harder and harder to plan for. I have wondered if in every home the time for family worship is always the signal for interruptions? The activities of the telephone, the grocer's boy, the postman, and Endicott's clients, all seemed to center punctually upon the few minutes allotted for our brief devotions. Endicott and I were a good

while coming to an agreement about how I ought to treat the incoming grocery man. Should the maid be instructed to entertain him, or should I put his claims before my communion with my Maker? If the telephone rang for Endicott, should he leave, and resume his reading after a prolonged business consultation? These were nice questions about which we could find no reliable precedent. There is no grocery boy in the "Cotter's Saturday Night," and no telephone. Nor did the children in those days have to start for High School at half past seven.

Once more we changed the form of our programme. We no longer gathered around the fireplace, but remained at the breakfast-table for

the briefest possible reading. If an interruption occurred, we adjourned, hoping for better luck next time. I still think that this was wise. It saved the custom from absolute destruction in those busy years of early programmes and varied interests.

This breakfast-table arrangement involved one difficulty. At times it was hard to manage a natural transition from table conversation to worship. Ideally, of course, the table-talk and the beauty of holiness should merge and blend with no incongruity. Sometimes our own did not. Once, long after school-days were over, when the children were at home on a vacation, we were in the midst of an uncensored discussion of the latest gossip. Endicott was not listening.

Barbara was well launched upon an emphatic exposition of her decided opinions, and paused midway for breath.

"Hosea eleven, one to twelve," said Endicott, unexpectedly beginning to read.

"Speaking of guns," gasped Barbara.

Margaret choked and vanished from the room, Geoffrey helpfully attending her with a glass of water. Barbara, perfectly composed, but knowing herself to be the root of all evil, followed them loyally. I was left gazing fixedly at the picture of Henry W. Longfellow on the wall, and trying to recall enough of his biography to keep my mind from other things, while Endicott went

seriously along with Hosea. I knew that the children were well on their way up the street to finish their hysterics at their grandmother's. Endicott, since then, waits for a signal from me before he ventures to introduce Hosea.

These have been a few of the problems. They seem strangely far in the past and unimportant now. We smile almost affectionately when we remember the old-time grocery boy and the postman of those days. All the details have gathered grace through the years. None of us would willingly forget those Sunday mornings when all three children climbed upon the long piano-bench beside Endicott to sing "Welcome, Delightful Morn," and "My days are gliding

swiftly by"; nor the times when Barbara, rocking vigorously in her little chair, led her brethren in responsive Scripture. And now, upon the rare occasions when the children are all at home again, the "meeting" seems very dear and altogether lovely. It has made us rich in memories and in a certain spiritual continuity of family life.

Endicott and I were mistaken when we thought that it would be easy to arrange. We were short-sighted in allowing outside distractions to loom so large. I am glad that we were militant. We know now that through all those years our Early Church was gathering power. I believe that any family who will cling to this ancient rite will find it not only the source of

precious memories, but the embodiment of a deep unity of spirit, richly inspiring. The family life will almost surely be linked with the eternal, in a way which will endure through all separation, far beyond the time when daily meetings must be things of long ago.

IV

THE FLOOR



ETTING the floor in a discussion conducted in our family is no simple matter; but once you have it, you are safe. We do not interrupt. Changing the subject, making irrelevant comments, or breaking up into little subgroups and talking all at once, are matters that we deal with to the full extent of the Parliamentary law. We do this, not because we are polite, but because each of us loves an audience. We love it to the extent that we are willing to grant it to others on the condition that they may later do even so to us. If one of us starts to talk,

the others listen; if two start at once, precedence is given to the elder, or the female. Geoffrey, it is true, being youngest, and male, has led an anxious life. But even he, once started, was always absolutely sure of the undivided attention of the whole house.

On this tradition, we have established the family conclave. The genuine friendly conversation demands this sense of safety. The most harrowing page in any literature, to my way of thinking, is the passage where Mr. Direck tries in vain to tell Mr. Britling about the little incident that happened to his friend Robinson in Toledo. Certainly one of the most pathetic touches is poor Mr. Direck's wistful day-dream later when he

imagines himself talking very slowly and carefully, while Mr. Britling listens. "Already he was more than halfway into dreamland," observes Mr. Wells, "or he could never have supposed anything so incredible."

A certain cousin of ours is very like Mr. Britling. She is to be found at a fine old farmhouse where we visit now and then. Whenever, in a placid moment, we all sit talking with the aunts and uncles, this particular cousin, not less dear than the others, but more restive, will come in from the milk-room, talking all the way. We hear her coming, and suspend whatever sentence we are in the middle of, to strain our ears to hear her; much as an Episcopal congregation pricks up when the choir-boys

begin to chant the processional in distant chapels. By that long-range method, our cousin puts a stop to our subject-matter, preëmpts the floor, and ignores our squatters' claims. We have only to refer to cousin Britling when one of us, at home, changes the subject without giving due notice in advance. "Come in from the milk-room," we implore, and the offender at once subsides.

There are groups, I know, who are not comfortable unless everybody is talking all the time. Put six of them in one room, and they automatically split up into three groups of two talkers each. Each group listens with scattering attention to itself and to the adjoining one; remarks are overheard and replied to in bright asides;

counter-messages are tossed back and forth with no checking system; until finally nobody is really talking to anybody else, although nobody is silent for an instant.

The only parallel that I can think of is the way in which, during very early years, the children sometimes played tiddledywinks. When the man-made rules of that staid sport became too wearing for their advanced intellects, they used to get to snapping all at once, promiscuously. Everybody snapped everybody else's wink, at the bull's-eye or the eye of his neighbor, regardless. This indiscriminating sort of thing lends a lawless charm most bracing to tiddledywinks, but it cancels conversation.

Now this is no mere craving for

long-winded monologues. We simply like a group, and we like to keep it whole. Why must it be broken up into chattering fragments? We want to see the personalities emerge distinctly. We like to hear a sustained sentence of each man's making, and enjoy the swift current of challenging thought that makes itself felt in a group of expressive beings who are all awaiting their turn to have their say. The interplay of individualities is more vivid and quickening if both men and women are of the group; but beware of those ladies who, the instant a remark stirs their interest, are possessed to gather a private auditor or two and start a low-voiced committee-meeting of their own, instead of enriching the general group with

their opinions. Such centers of volubility in the side-lines ruin real talk.

I suppose that even I would not demand that the guests at a large social function should sit in a great ring while each in turn stood up and gave his Oral Theme. At large receptions everybody must talk and nobody listens. But who likes a large reception anyway?

What I really do like is a group of guests around our fireplace of a winter evening, when Geoffrey comes home unexpectedly from his work. Barbara meets him in the hall, and in her condensed and rapid way gives him the outline of such recent gossip as he needs to know. I meanwhile slip away in the direction of the larder, and beckon him out for a sustaining

bit of pie. I have learned that Geoffrey rates it one of the most exquisite joys of an unexpected home-coming to have his mother offer him food of the forbidden variety that he had to steal out of the moonlit refrigerator of old.

"Who's in there?" says Geoffrey from his throne on the kitchen table.

He learns.

"What are they talking about?"

Barbara gracefully eavesdrops round the dining-room door. "Father is telling his Darius Cobb stories," she reports cheerfully.

"Then we have plenty of time." Geoffrey finishes his pie with the lingering Fletcherism of which its brand is worthy; and we watch and listen for an interval when we can join the fireside group.

There, in that circle of alert men and women of assorted ages and callings, our thoughts feather out and fly. There is time to think, and time to express one's mind; time also to change it. It is not only an interchange of ready-made ideas; it is a chance to hatch some new ones and add them to our own. We catch tantalizing glimpses into each other's hidden prejudices, and we disclose unexpected convictions by the way.

But the most intimate moment of all comes after the company goes. Probably a truly upright family would not comment upon the vanished guest. We do. We discuss him and all his works. Sometimes, after this stimulating ceremony is over and we are on our way to bed, some-

body thinks of an additional grain of truth which calls for conflicting comment. We pause upon the stairs for another session. I can see Endicott dimly, by the half-light in the hall, as he brings down his fist on the newel post to emphasize a vigorous ultimatum. In the heavy shadows he looks like a Rodin study of Authority. I seat myself comfortably on the topmost stair and peer down through the banisters at him, and bide my time. When that time comes, I know, I shall carry my point; but for the present he has the floor. The floor! — that choice possession which none except the very spry can take away!

V

RETRIEVING THE AIREDALE



E are sending Geoffrey a half-grown Airedale pup," wrote Uncle Tyler. "His registered name is Jasper III. Don't let him run by himself until you have shown him the country."

If Jasper was a puppy, he was old for his age. He was approximately the size of a sheep, though more gaunt and rangey in build; and he had the easy gait of a zebra. His expression was worn and sapient. This aspect of advanced age was heightened by the brown wisps of beard that floated around his chin.

He had an elderly mannerism of cocking one eyebrow and glancing about, sidelong, out of the corner of one cynical eye. He looked like an ancient dervish — shrewd and inscrutable.

But however aged Jasper looked, his stride was agile. "Don't let the dog out!" shouted the family in one breath if one of us went to the door. We developed an elaborate technique of stage-exit to get out of the house at all; first backing discreetly to the door, squeezing hastily through and finally stuffing back such portions of Jasper's leaping frame as had managed to emerge.

Twice daily, our pet walked out on a leash. Geoffrey was showing him the country. The rest of us were

offered in turn the privilege of acting as Burton Holmes ourselves, if we liked, but we all assured Geoffrey that we objected personally to going on a leash. Our dog had therefore seen only such parts of the country as his master had had time to show him, when, on New Year's Sunday, he escaped.

Margaret was responsible. Two friends had called for her to go with them to four o'clock Vespers. Knowing the habits of our captive animal, they opened the door cautiously, one of them guarding the entrance with her knee. Jasper was too quick, and too expert at the pole-vaulter's art. He flew over the puny barrier, rushed down the drive, and pranced deliriously off across the snow.

"Catch him!" gasped the girls, as Margaret plunged down the steps. She whistled busily as she ran. Surely he would come! He was still in sight against the sky-line, dancing on his hind legs like some fairy-tale goblin in the snow. If only they could reach the top of the hill before he finished his barn-dance! Just at this point, the minister's bull-dog Mike came trotting happily down the west road, and with him Terence, the belligerent Irish terrier owned by the High-School principal. Into this impeccable company sailed Jasper, a yelping lunatic, wild with joy. They greeted him with shouts, and all three rolled with amusement in the drifts.

The breathless girls came scrambling over the hill, and charged three

abreast toward the heap of dogs. Jasper saw them first. With a kangaroo leap he cleared the fence, and, followed by Mike and the terrier, went skimming in great sweeping circles toward the square. Here, Admiral Sims, the grocer's young spaniel, joined the flying squadron. The dogs stopped to explain matters to the Admiral.

"Oh!" gasped one of the pursuers, "if we could only creep up on 'em now!"

Creeping up, one finds, is not the right method of pursuit for such as Jasper. They had barely gained the green when Judge Granger's white setter, Lady Montague, appeared around the corner by the church. Head over heels went Admiral Sims.

Swifter than eagles flew Mike and the terrier. But more fleet than they all, went Jasper. Lady Montague met them serenely in the wide enclosure by the church. Once more the circle of dogs stood motionless, noses together, tails all wagging amiably, plumed tail, bob-tail, willow tail, screw-tail, and the rag-tag tail of our Jasper.

People were still going into church. As Margaret and her friends came pounding along, they thought feverishly of those quiet old days when they used to go to Vespers themselves. But even upon holy ground, the Airedale must be captured. Into the circle of dogs dashed Margaret, seizing the startled Jasper by two handfuls of his wiry wool.

Then she turned a heated countenance to her friends. "Go into church," said she solemnly. "All I have to do now is to take Jasper home. I shall be with you in ten minutes."

They obeyed, protesting.

"Come, Jasper," said Margaret in disciplinary monotone, a persuasive hand upon his collar.

She stood aside politely to let Judge and Mrs. Granger pass into divine worship, and then she set off across the lawn dragging her lion couchant beside her over the frozen crust. At the gate he rose with a jerk, rampant — and his collar slipped off in her hand.

Oh, dogs can laugh — wild mirth, an ecstasy of humor. Down the long

hill they flew, hysterical with glee; Mike and the Admiral and Terence in the rear, Lady Montague and Jasper well ahead.

Margaret set her teeth. She was accountable to Geoffrey for Jasper's safe convoy. She had vague, ascetic visions of following, following, still whistling morbidly, until she died. With the warm collar still in hand, she toiled on gloomily, now at a foot-pace, now at a moderate trot. The term "Dog-trot" can assume a richness of significance not always apparent. In a sketchy, canine way, they mapped the whole township and all its rural routes, returning at last by early star-rise down the west road to the home neighborhood again.

Here Margaret had an inspiration.

Going to the door of the High-School principal, she rang the bell.

"*Would* you be willing," said she, "to see if you can call Terence? If all the rest of these dogs would go home, I might be able to catch Jasper."

A house-to-house canvass of all the dog-owners she made, with conscientious thoroughness. She roused them all, even Judge Granger's distinguished son. He greeted her appeal with a roar of frivolous gayety, but he called Lady Montague.

"Shall I call Mike too?" he inquired. "The minister and my father are staying for a committee meeting after Vespers."

"*Vespers*," thought Margaret.

"Yes, call him," she said. "Do."

This left only Jasper. He flitted briskly up the embankment near our neighbor's house, and dared her to come near. She glanced over at our own home. There was a light in Geoffrey's room. With parched lips she whistled the family whistle. Up went the window.

"Geoffrey," said Margaret mildly, "Jasper got out. He won't come in."

"Why don't you whistle for him?" suggested the tranquil Geoffrey.

Margaret walked stonily into the house, and met her brother in the hall.

"Here," she said bitterly, "here is Jasper's collar. *You* whistle."

A moment later, Geoffrey and Jasper came in, hand in hand, and sat down before the fire.

"Geoffrey," said Margaret gently, after a thoughtful pause, "when did Uncle Tyler say we might let Jasper run?"

"As soon as he's seen the country."

Margaret looked at Jasper, and Jasper, cocking one eyebrow, looked at her.

"Well," said Margaret, "he has."

VI

ENDICOTT AND I REDUCE



NDICOTT had been reading a book on diet. It told how to "Feast and be Slim." There are nearly two hundred pounds of Endicott. The last time he was measured for a suit, he asked me with some uneasiness if I had noticed that he was acquiring as to waist-line what our son Geoffrey calls a "presence." A man with a presence, says Geoffrey, must have a remarkable profile and a lofty manner, or look like Tammany; likewise the Globe Man. Endicott knew that as far as looks were concerned he could well afford a presence. He was

tired, anyway, of being taken for a minister, and the Globe Man would be a change. But the author of "Feast and be Slim" had made a great point of the spare figure for its own sake. Endicott said that he was going to diet, according to the plan laid down by the author of *Feast*.

I at once offered to plan the meals with this in mind.

"No," said Endicott, "part of this chap's idea is that you select from the natural family meal only the part most suitable to your purpose. It makes no trouble for the rest of the family. Don't give it another thought."

I said nothing, but I knew where he kept the book. I read it. Then I had a talk with the maid. The family

meals I left unabridged, but there were certain non-carbohydrates recommended in the book. These I ordered in abundance. At least my husband should not starve.

"No butter?" said Barbara to her father at breakfast next morning.

"No," said Endicott with quiet dignity. "I am going to be abstemious for a few weeks."

"Abstemious" has always been a cherished word with Endicott, but the children are used to hearing it only when the food in question is not popular with the head of the house. Barbara looked at the butter, and tasted a crumb of it daintily at the tip of a bit of bread. Then she watched her father, who was thoughtfully munching a dry portion of ce-

real garnished with Malaga grapes. Then Barbara looked at Geoffrey, and then she went on with her breakfast.

"Is he really planning to feast and be slim?" The door had hardly closed after the departing men when Barbara had me by the arm. "Because if he is, he won't. The book's been in his newspaper pile for a week, and I have read it through." Barbara, quite satisfied, trailed through the door. "He took the car to the office this morning," she called back from the stairs. "The book says you must exercise," she added, and vanished.

That evening when the children were out, Endicott, setting his eyeglasses astride his ancestral nose, looked at me over his paper.

"I must exercise regularly in connection with this diet," said he, "or when my weight disappears I shall be more or less haggard. The general constitution must be kept up." Endicott laid a hickory log on the andirons. "I 've ordered a fresh load of wood," he went on, "and when it comes, Andrews will dump it in a different part of the cellar. I told him how. Don't have it on your mind." Endicott went out into the hall and returned with both hands full.

"I knew that the children were going out," said he genially, " and I thought that some candy would be pleasant. We have n't eaten our old-fashioned candy and peanuts by ourselves for some time." He handed me my bag of peanuts and a generous

newspaper for my shells, and took out his knife to cut the ribbon on the candy box.

"But —" I hesitated. Here were the symbols of our rare irresponsible revels together. To intrude at such a moment a question of the flesh! "Your diet, you know—" I said it gently with an inquiring inflection.

Endicott was pouring his peanuts into his newspaper, and he paused halfway. "I did n't think," said he. "Of course they do expect you to diet between meals, don't they?" He pondered. Then he poured the rest of the peanuts. "I have n't fairly begun to diet yet. We 'll call to-day an experimental trial, and begin technically to-morrow morning."

I have always been glad that

Endicott was of a legal turn of mind. As the wife of one of the elders of the bar, I have always felt secure.

The next afternoon I walked into our front drive in time to see Andrews's wood-wagon disappearing down the street. With housewifely interest I went to the cellar stairs to see if everything had been locked up properly. Some one was in the cellar. It was Endicott. His cane leaned against the arm of the old rocking-chair in which he sat. The load of wood had been deposited in the bulkhead, and Endicott, conveniently seated in a chair and a draft, was busily aiming stick after stick at the corner where the wood always goes. I sat down on the top stair and waved at him sociably.

"I am exercising," said Endicott. "I told Andrews to have the wood dumped here for me to pitch. He said that you liked to have the door of the bulkhead locked, and I 'm getting the worst of it out of the way."

"Yes," said I, "but we 're going out to dinner. It 's five now."

Endicott handed me indulgently up the stairs. "When we get home," said he, "I 'll pitch enough more so that we can lock the door for the night. No burglar will take the trouble to climb through that pile this evening."

He went to his room and I heard him telephoning. I wanted that door locked. I seized a bushel basket and flew to the pile. Basket after basket went busily into the corner. I had to work silently; I longed to work faster.

I had not realized that the pile was so large. My head was just beneath the bulkhead door, when suddenly the leaves of the roof parted above me, and I looked up into the astonished eyes of Andrews.

"Mr. Avery telephoned to me just now," gasped Andrews, recovering. "He told me to pitch in the wood." Andrews is a man of poise. He had taken my basket and was at work. Thoughtfully I went upstairs to dress.

The next day Endicott arrived at the house with a chest-exerciser, a mechanism of weights and springs and handles, and a clamp by which to affix it to the study wall. Endicott does not need an increased chest development. All that he needs is an arrested presence. But the chest-

exerciser was warmly recommended by the books. The results were to be a matter of persistence, merely.

For the next few weeks it was no such simple matter to cater for Endicott. One could never tell when he might suspend his training and call for the fat of the land. The maid would inquire delicately, "And do ye know, ma'am, will he be dieting to-day?" As time went on, these seasons of reprieve were extended enough to amount to a furlough. I heard him tell Geoffrey in confidence that he had lost approximately a gramme a fortnight.

He gained, however, in other ways. The methods, the terms, the ideals, and caprices of a new cult had become familiar to him. He had collected

quite an impressive set of apparatus and had learned to use it all. No marksman could have protested more hotly against the removal of the stag's antlers from the mantel than Endicott against the removal of his chest-exerciser from his study wall. It will always remain there, a trophy of great days.

"You never use it," objected Barbara.

"How do you know when I use it?" inquired her father with some severity.

"Because it squeaks," said Barbara.

In the meantime, I was really reducing. Admiring Endicott's large-hearted way of sharing his ambition, I nevertheless shrank from telling about my own experiences, though I

was making a striking success at it. I still shrink. The matronly woman who decides to go into training has her humorous moments. Just one princely soul I discovered who did not laugh at my ambitions. His fine tact would have adorned queens' palaces. I was on my weekly trip to weigh myself on the naturalization scales at the court-house when I came upon Endicott and his partner there, in earnest consultation. I could not retreat; I would not dissemble. I stepped upon the scales. "Mr. Taft and I," said I casually, "have decided to reduce."

The princely one bowed gravely. "If you really *care* to reduce," said he, "I wish you success."

Both those gallant men nobly re-

frained from going near the scales. There are times when one has a deep appreciation for these graceful little amenities of omission.

In general, however, I cannot say that I found people ideally sensitive to the beauty of my enterprise. Geoffrey found a gloomy sort of pleasure in calling me Susannah di Milo. He brought me boxes of candy, arguing that if he presented it I would have to eat it out of mere politeness. Firmly, with much the same feelings that I had when I taught him not to take mice and turtles to his room, I now trained my son not to bring me candy. Floral tributes, fruit, flowers, and jewels I would accept; but candy, popcorn, and peanuts I gave to the poor.

I have grown reasonably thin. But I wish now that in my years of abundance I had taken more comfort. I am impatient now as never before with the callow distaste for anything but the most regulation fashion-plated figure. What else appears so tragic in Arnold Bennett's stories as the irrevocable way in which his heroines grow middle-aged and fat, fat and old; fat and helpless? I rebel, now that I can rebel gracefully. The most gracious memories in my life chance to concern old age grown comfortable; matronly women who were wide-bosomed and firm of poise; certain ample dresses with folds and folds of softness; gentle aunts and grandmothers whose shoulders were not sharp. I cannot find it

all unlovely, this tendency of people to gather substance with the years. Our modern ambition to keep a normal figure is unquestionably a wholesome thing. But I deplore extremes of fashion. Are we in danger of narrowing our minds with our silhouettes? We must not forget the quiet serenity which oftenest seems to belong to women who are large, nor the sense of peace and hearthside calm that we feel when we are with them. After all, the sylph-like figure will never seem just right for holding a tired little boy at bedtime until he goes to sleep.

Oh, well! I am glad that I reduced. I like a trim shadow on the sidewalk, and I like my narrow sleeves. It is pleasant to know that

this matter of the flesh is under our control, and I wish that I had known it twenty years ago. I think that even Endicott could afford a less commanding presence. As soon as cold weather comes he is planning once more to reduce. With a certain blend of anxiety and wifely awe, I am awaiting the abstemious days to come. The chest-exerciser and the woodpile also wait, gathering dust and cobwebs. And if his grammes do not appreciably decrease, I shall not care, nor yet be much surprised.

VII

THE AMATEUR CHESSMAN



NY game of chance or skill has its element of symbolism. The more highly developed the game, the more striking its parallel to life. The home run, the goal, the hitting of the mark, the taking of a trick, the throw of the dice — all these have become figurative terms, not alone because they are picturesque of themselves, but because they dramatize experience.

Of all games in the world, the most allegorical is chess. For this reason, Barbara selected it as the last hope for her sister Margaret. She thought it a pity for any person to go through

a world of games and to remain a hardened Philistine and self-confessed outsider as Margaret was doing. She felt sure that her sister would respond to the charm and symbolism of playing if only the matter could once be presented to her in the proper form.

Margaret had hitherto been entirely impervious. Our family divides rather naturally into partnerships in games. Endicott and I play best together, because he requires a partner with sufficient authority and force of character to center his attention on the progress of the game. Barbara and Geoffrey make a keen and determined pair of opponents for us, their intuitions responsive, their tastes in brilliant ventures well matched. But Margaret long since gave herself up

as hopeless. She admires all sorts of games in a distant fashion, but when forced to take an active part she has a way of succumbing at critical moments as if from a species of shell-shock, and must be led tactfully from the field. She shows her good-will by sitting near us when we play, and by answering the telephone and the doorbell when they ring.

Barbara cannot reconcile herself to this deficiency in one so near of kin. It was in a moment of extreme desperation that she hit upon chess as just the thing for Margaret. The presence of only two players at the board ought in itself to be soothing. The long intervals of deliberation between moves should relieve nervous tension, and the picturesque ap-

pearance of the chessmen would meanwhile capture the imagination.

Margaret was docile. She conscientiously learned the moves from the encyclopœdia, and the traditions from Morphy's Manual, and sat down to the game with an attitude of pale determination that went to the hearts of those who knew her.

In Margaret's hands, chess became allegorical, indeed. The thoroughly helpless amateur can find three pleasures in the royal game which to Mr. Morphy immortality itself shall not restore; three pleasures: a fresh delight in the personality of the various chessmen; the recklessness of uncertain and irresponsible moves; and the unprecedented thrill of checkmating the opposing king by accident.

The expert, it is true, may sometimes retain through life a personal appreciation of the characters of the pieces: the conservative habits of the king; the politic, sidelong bishop; the stout little plodding pawns. But since the days of his forgotten apprenticeship, Mr. Morphy has not known their many-sided natures. To the true expert the pieces on the board have become subject people; as far as independence of purpose goes, they might as well all be pawns. With a novice, on the contrary, the men and women of the chessboard display their individuality and their Old World caprices, their mediæval greatness of heart. Like Aragon and the Plantagenets, they have magnificent leisure for the purposeless and daring quest.

The stiff, circular eyes of the simple boxwood knight stare casually about him as he goes. Irresponsibly he twists among his enemies, now drawing rein in the cross-country path of the angry bishop, now blowing his horn at the very drawbridge of the king. It is no cheap impunity that he faces in his errant hardihood. Margaret's knights often die in harness, all unshriven. That risk lends unfailing zest for excursions into the enemy's country. Most of all she loves her gentle horsemen.

She is also very loyal to the bishop. One evening Barbara accidentally imperiled her queen. Only the opposing bishop needed to be sacrificed to capture her. The spectators were breathless at her certain fate. But

Margaret esteems the stately bishop. Rather this man saved for defense than risked for such a captive. The bishop withdrew, and the queen went on her destructive way.

Of all the men the one who least concerns Margaret is the king. She considers him a non-committal monarch at best. At times, imperial and menacing, he may conquer, with goodly backing from his yeomen, his wife, and his chivalry. Sometimes, and far more often, he is like Lear, his royal guard cut down, no longer terrible in arms. And at his death he likes to send urgently for his bishop, who is solacing though powerless to save. Whenever Margaret sees that her king is surely about to lose his head, she uses her last move to bring

the bishop hurrying to his side. Endicott, chancing to pass by the board one night just as Margaret made this ceremonial move, paused to reason with her about it. He refused to see the beauty of this pious return of the out-bound bishop at the last battle-cry of the king. But Margaret still believes that a move may well be wasted to the end that everything may happen decently and in order.

In fact, as time went on and Margaret's codes became more and more complicated, Barbara began to feel that the emphasis upon the symbolism of the game was capable of being over-stressed. She hated to think that her sister's methods in life would be as irrational and as unprincipled

as her moves in chess. For Margaret's gambits in general are characterized by a grand disregard for consequences. Let her men rush forth to the edge of the hostile country. Once there, there will be time enough to peer around and reconnoiter and see what they can see. Meanwhile, the enemy is battering gloriously at the postern gate, but at least the fight is on.

Part of the recklessness of these opening moves consists in the fact that the girls are on such confidential terms.

"This need not worry you at present," says Margaret, planting her castle on an unprotected crag. "I'm only putting it there in *case*."

That sort of thing saves a great

deal of time. Barbara might otherwise have found it necessary to waste long minutes trying to fathom the unknowable of the scheme. Without this companionable interchange, chess is the most lonely of human experiences. There you sit, solitary and unsignaled — a point of thought, a center of calculation. You have no partner. The world is canceled for the time, except, perched opposite you, another hermit intellect, sitting remote and sinister. Oh, no! The amateur should be allowed to discuss his plots!

I have often thought that strange clues to character appear around the friendly chessboard. There is the supposedly neutral onlooker who cannot possibly remain neutral while he

murmurs warnings or laments the ill-judged moves. Without him how tame both life and chess would be. There is the stout-hearted player who refuses to resign though his defeat is demonstrably certain, but continues to jog about the board, eluding actual capture. In life, would he resign? There is the player who gives little shrieks at unexpected attacks; the player who explains his mistakes and describes what he intended to do instead; the player who makes no sign whatever of gloating or despair. Most striking of all is the behavior of people when they face the necessity of playing against their own past mistakes. A wrong move can never be retracted by the thoroughbred. No apology, no retracing of the path;

no attempt to "be the architect of the irrevocable past"; the playing must go on as if the consequences were part of the plan. Indeed, the game is allegorical, with its checkered board and far crusades.

In my mind, however, the final test of true insight is the degree in which a person can enjoy the end of a game of chess when he is the defeated player. Checkmate, of all human inventions, is the most perfect type of utter finality. In other conclusions there is something left ragged, something in abeyance. Here there is no shading, no balancing of the scales. The victor wins not by majority as in cards; success or failure is unanimous. There was one ballot, and that is cast. No matter how

faulty the playing that went before, the end of a game of chess is always perfect. That is why the game so fascinates the imagination. Out of its austere antiquity comes one beautiful gift for the most hopeless amateur; at least he can be perfectly defeated. The quiet fatalism of it is as perfect for him as for the Chinese wizard centuries ago playing with amber chessmen. It is as complete as for the ancient Persian who thought of the magical final phrase: *Shah-mat!* Checkmate! The king is dead.

VIII

ENDICOTT AND I GO FISHING



NDICOTT and I fully appreciate the discrepancy between our manner of taking a fishing trip, and all the instinctive tendencies of well-ordered couples. We are not artistic about it. We have no startling theories about it, nor any quarrel with the habits of other fishermen. We frankly admire the fine art of Henry van Dyke's masterly fishing of "Little Rivers," and we have read with chuckling appreciation Bliss Perry's exposition of the crackling-underbrush-and-hip-rubber-boots delights of "fishing with a worm." We are neither skill-

ful fly-fishers like Van Dyke, nor as fearlessly close to nature as Mr. Perry. We violate, moreover, the cardinal rule of fishermen. It is well known that the unexpected lure of watery spring sunlight, suggestive of red-winged blackbirds and pussy-willows, or perhaps the chance sound of a bluebird's distant warble, should be the proper motive force which should put into the fisher-heart an irresistible craving for the trout-run, and should constrain him to drop all engagements to wander through dandelion lanes to cowslip-covered tussocks in some far cranberry bog. In the face of this tradition, settled, middle-aged couple that we are, we arrange our fishing trips beforehand. Endicott plans not more carefully

for his Short Calendar nor I more systematically for my best dinner-party than we both together settle the details of our day at the farm.

Therefore, when the six o'clock sunlight brightened the dewdrops on the rambler roses outside our dining-room window one glorious July morning, we had no adventuresome thrill at the thought of duties to be deserted as we accepted the parting attentions of the children. The family lunch-basket, knobby with tin cups and sandwiches, was ready. Our six-quart pail and our frying-pan leaned sociably against the front doorstep. Barbara laid near them a pile of crisp kindling-wood — Endicott and I have had experience with impromptu twigs and bark which ought to be inflam-

mable — and Geoffrey added a large tin box labeled "Medium Screws," chivalrously resisting the temptation to give it more than one small suggestive shake for the benefit of his sisters.

No possible item of equipment was lacking, when, arrayed for our trip, we ascended the lofty step of the two-seated carriage which was to take us to the farm. Not that Endicott and I cannot ride in a one-seated vehicle together. But with our kindling-wood, our frying-pan and our six-quart pail, our shawls and our hammock, our block of ice, my tackle and the medium screws, we were more comfortable each with a seat alone.

So we started out, with our cheerfully rattling cargo, leaving our children appreciative spectators on the

front doorstep. Endicott insisted on driving. He dislikes to drive, and I can never relax my spinal column while he holds the reins. Moreover, I myself delight in driving, and he feels happy and secure in my horsemanship. But Endicott has sometimes an ignoble regard for appearances, within city limits. Alone by ourselves we do as we will, contrary to the codes of manly chivalry and feminine helplessness. We have tried family fishing-parties, but the atmosphere is ruined. Endicott feels that he must play the part of gallant spouse and indulgent patriarch when the children are by, and the girls expect me to be a gracious out-of-door Ceres, aloof and artistic; and Ceres, forsooth, may not bail out a boat.

We stopped at the fish market on the way, and Endicott tucked a cool, soft package of bluefish carefully against our ice before we started again. This business was performed in impressive silence. I have learned to ignore the bluefish part of our trips. It always seems the most flagrant incident of our programme—until lunch-time.

On our journey we talked a little. Alone with each other!—we almost felt obliged to be entertaining. We spoke of the excellent weather, of our parting instructions to household and stenographer, of the children and the town meeting. And Endicott related anecdotes.

But once at the old beaver lake, where the twisted orchard trees had

dropped their little green apples into the water where they bobbed up and down in the ripples — when we found the hammock hooks still in the trees where we had left them, and the old flat-bottomed boat full of the water of many rains — then Endicott and I became frankly ourselves, irresponsible and unembarrassed.

"Let me bail out the boat for you this time," said Endicott, turning as he stood halfway up the orchard slope with his arms full of hammock and shawls. His attitude expressed genuine readiness to drop every preference together with his burden and rush to the pumps without delay. The best part of an independent feeling is the knowledge that at any moment one may resort to the cling-

ing-vine attitude and find a worthy support whereon to twine. The advantages of the married state are summed up for me in my sensation when Endicott offers to bail out my boat. But no such sentimental element was in my air as I moored my craft beside the nearest clump of blue-flags and perched firmly on the highest seat with my pail and my sponge. The ambition of dipping up the Atlantic with a teacup is rendered somehow small and unworthy by its obvious futility, while in that boat there seemed to be nearly as much to conquer, but it had been emptied before, and there was the joy of the last muddy spongeful to look forward to. So, crouched with skillfully upgathered skirts in the prow of the

boat, I dipped and dipped, while the bright splash of the water over the boatside stirred up the twinkling school of minnows in the sun. A stake-driver flapped over and settled in the cat-tails, and a kingfisher perched watchfully on the shad-bush by the dam. Obviously a poor fishing day, thought the kingfisher and I, with quizzical glances at each other; but he still swung on his silver-green bough, and I whole-heartedly mopped out the last puddles, jointed my rod, unreeled my line, and provided my hook with a well-chosen medium screw.

I could see Endicott twisting in the hammock to watch me row across the pond, and I feathered my strokes as well as the stiff, wooden oarlocks

would allow, because Endicott — scrape went the bottom of the boat! A settled feeling as the crumbling stump whereon I was moored gave way a little to let the boat's beams sink comfortably into it, a futile lashing of the waves when I tried to push myself off by backing water, or to progress by straight rowing — no use! I must pole. I poled. The dizzy sweep of my boat as I gave the muddy ground a vigorous push with my brandished oar told me I was free, and I sat down to row again. My anchorage was as fast as ever. I must pole on the other side. I poled. I poled until I felt that all my fishes must be dizzied to docility. Around and around I could go with ease; any tangent to the circle was impossible.

There are times when solid foundations beneath one's feet are exasperating instead of reassuring.

I knew that Endicott was watching. He has reached that point of perfect manners when he stands firmly with his back against such stone walls as I may wish to climb, forming of himself a disinterested and most convenient post for me to snatch at if I need to, keeping the while a dreamy gaze on far-off landscapes. He talks to the horse while I climb into carriages. He did not watch me bail out the boat. But a double time of service would be necessary to make any easeful husband forego the pleasure of seeing his erstwhile blithesome *Frau* a-swing upon a stump in a pond. I had almost decided to begin to fish,

thus giving him the impression that I had been circulating to get my bearings and to locate the best fishing-holes, when I saw Endicott rise from his hammock. Ordinarily I do not watch his exit from hammocks, though it is a notable sight. Down to the verge he came, a modern Bedivere. Was he planning to swim out to my rescue?

"Ship ahoy!" he called between his hands. His side whiskers, I knew, were a-bristle with enjoyment of the subtle humor of this remark. I responded rather coolly with that feminine salutation which my daughters call a "hoo-hoo."

"Say! Why do you sit on the stump?" he inquired impersonally, in carefully separated syllables.

"Can't move," I shouted, in my most carrying and formal woman's club voice.

"Get into the end of the boat! You 're sitting *on* the *stump*," he roared.

Almost I decided to remain where I was and to fish with dignity, moving perhaps by degrees away from the center of gravity of my scow. But the logic of the situation was too beautiful to be so disregarded. I stepped into the stern. With disconcerting suddenness my shallop plunged, swung about, and floated lightly though unevenly upon the waves once more. I balanced back to my rowing-bench and paddled to my favorite fishing-cove. The white birches flickered in the quiet water

while I trailed my hook idly over the edge of the boat. Small, radiant sunfish came by twos and threes and floated, round-eyed, near the bait, which I twitched away from their comical mouths, and waited for a pout or a pickerel.

One might as well look to see the rainy Pleiades in the sunshine as a pout on a pleasant day. When I fish for fish, I go with my son in the drizzling twilight; on a pleasure trip with Endicott it is as well, after all, to stop at the fish-market. For the bluefish, cooked in the intrusive frying-pan, over our kindled-by-kindling-wood fire, eaten from a paper plate, was a part of the perfection of that sunny afternoon; almost as much a part as the singing of the grass-

hoppers in the daisy-field, and the quivering shadows made by the apple leaves upon the grass. Endicott and I learn again to talk to each other on our fishing trips. Tradition helps us there; we always have talked under that particular tree, and it is easier to open the way again, perhaps beginning where we left off the year before when the apple blossoms were falling on the grass and the veery sang where we found the ovenbird's nest years ago. An afternoon under the apple tree, and then another hour in the boat, with Endicott to row, and the sunset fading into star-rise — I think we were not sorry to leave the perch and the pickerel still in the shadows around the toad-lily roots, when it came time for us to drive

home along the old wood road, while the cool mist came out of the forest where the katydids were singing, and fireflies were dancing in the dark.

IX

CECROPIA MOTH AND OTHER STUDIES



NDICOTT is not an ardent student of the birds and bees. He observes them affably when we point them out to him, but without enthusiasm. The Agassiz Clubs that flourished in New England during his youth left him virtually untouched, except for one single item of nature-lore which he did permanently retain: he knows the Cecropia Moth. Whenever one of us mentions having seen a new moth or butterfly, Endicott kindles with instant attention. "Was it," he inquires hopefully, "a Cecropia?"

I believe that to know the name of one moth really well is to have the key to the enjoyment of all moths. In the first place, the intellectual pleasure of classification is open. Endicott's mode of identifying moths and butterflies is complete and simple. He knows that any lepidopterous insect must be one of two things; it is either Cecropia or not-Cecropia. Judged by every rule of logic, this theory of division is flawless. In the second place, a person who knows one moth is always in a position to add to his knowledge. Endicott, to be sure, never adds to his, but if he should ever care to do so he could start from the vantage-point of a life-long interest in the subject. And in the third place, when occasionally a

moth does turn out to be a Cecropia, there comes a moment of indescribable satisfaction, when rich contentment floods the spirit; a blend of astonishment, recognition, rapt appreciation, and proper pride. I know that a smattering of knowledge is looked down upon by the thorough scholar, and that educators must stress the essentials and frown upon the superficial; but there are certain superficialities that arouse the spirit in a degree all out of proportion to their value. I am sure that Endicott takes more pride in his one moth than he ever took in his ability to read and write.

When the children were small, I hoped that they might grow up with a fortunate mental balance, nicely

adjusted between my own careful habits of accurate information, and Endicott's sense of the artistic glamour of common things. I knew enough about botany and bird-study to make a beginning with the children and send for hand-books; I started very early to teach them the names of the birds and flowers. The girls were rapid and acquisitive pupils, keeping lists and scouring the woods and using an old herbarium of mine for their pressed flowers and ferns. But Geoffrey had a scientific bent that was none of my planning. I had thought that my tastes were sufficiently broad; I can appreciate the beauty of the flowers, birds, rocks, trees, and stars; — but when it comes to reptiles, I draw the line. Doubtless the

reptiles and water-creatures demonstrate many phases of the miracle of animate form; indeed I am ready to admit that they have plenty of life. But I hold that researches in this line can be pushed too far. I ruthlessly trained both my son and his dog not to bring home snakes.

Turtles, however, and that small species of lizards called newts, and all sorts of frogs, were different. If the girls could collect the pitcher-plant and the swamp-azalea in the old cranberry-bog at the farm, why should Geoffrey not be allowed to collect the snapping turtle, the salamander, and the horned pout? He kept them in a tank sunk in the ground just inside a wire enclosure that had once served as a paddock

for the puppy. This gave the amphibious specimens room to range. One afternoon a neighbor, coming in to look at the collection, told the eight-year-old Geoffrey that turtles lived a hundred years, and that if you carved your name on the shell and took the turtle back to the pond, your grandchildren might later on find it and recognize it as yours. The neighbor assured Geoffrey that the carving on the shell would be entirely painless to the turtle.

Geoffrey was fired at once. He was too little to carve the letters neatly himself; but in view of my well-known skill in writing on birthday cakes with pink frosting at his dictation, he now sought me out, laid his largest turtle in my lap, handed me

his sharpest knife, and requested an inscription.

At times I have found it a strain to live up to my son's estimate of my talents. Anybody who has seen an immense gray turtle stretch out his serious head and look back over his shoulder to watch an intruding engraver at work upon his roof, will remember that a turtle's eyes can take on an expression of mild rebuke. I felt bound by the codes of sportsmanship to finish the initials I had begun, but I explained to Geoffrey that I could no longer bear to face the eye of that turtle. Geoffrey, with immediate inspiration, got a newspaper, rolled it up in the shape of a funnel, and held it over the turtle's head until I finished my carving. It

looked like an ether-cone, but it served its purpose in shielding me from the coldness of the turtle's gaze.

The next step was to take the turtle back to the pond. Geoffrey decided to make a clean sweep of his whole collection, return everything to the pond, and catch some fresh newts. Therefore one afternoon in April he and three other little boys set out on a pilgrimage to Duck's Pond. Geoffrey carried a fishing-creel full of turtles, and a tin pail full of newts. He also took his long-handled dip-net with which to catch more newts at the pond. On their way the boys saw a grocer's wagon overtaking them, and decided to hook a ride to the bridge. Up went the three friends like monkeys, and

up went Geoffrey. But his leap was complicated by the dip-net. The long pole hit against the wheel, and twitched him neatly out of the wagon, landing him flat on his face in the road. Turtles flew in every direction. Rivers of newts flooded the highway. The kind grocery man turned back, helped to collect all these scattered passengers, lent Geoffrey a handkerchief to mop his wounded face, and hoisted him and his aboard.

But that afternoon was not one of Geoffrey's lucky days. The boys found that their path through the woods to the old pond was interrupted by a little rivulet which the spring rains had swollen to a wide stream. One of the hundred uses of a dip-net is its convenience as a vault-

ing-pole. If you plant the end of the handle in the middle of the stream, take a good flying leap, and keep a steady hold, it lands you lightly on the other brink. One by one the boys flew over, and then came Geoffrey's turn. As a precautionary measure he emptied his fishing-creel of turtles and ladled them in the dip-net across the stream to his friends who received them on the other bank. Then, skillfully balancing his pail of lizards in his free hand, he grasped the vaulting-pole, and leaped. The one drawback about a vaulting-pole is the fact that an uneven river-bed affords sometimes a treacherous pivot for its curve. Just as Geoffrey reached the perpendicular, a rock caught the pole, and held it firmly upright; and there

hung Geoffrey, at half-mast. He could not swing the pole in any direction. It was wedged too firmly in the rocks. The pole was slippery from long experience in many ponds, and the falling action was swift. Down slid Geoffrey into the middle of the water. His newts and his cap swam happily down-stream together, while he, brandishing dip-net and pail, waded ashore, marched his turtles safely at last to Duck's Pond, and bade them good-bye for a hundred years.

At supper-time, a little tramp, muddy and soaking from head to foot, made his way homeward. His cap was gone. His hair was plastered down in an amateur attempt at a stylish parting in the middle. On his

nose and across his cheek were rough red scratches where his face had bled and dried. In his hands he carried his dip-net and a large tin pail of newts. I saw him coming, and went to meet him at the front door.

"I am afraid," said Geoffrey apologetically, "that I have spoiled my looks for Easter."

I had to admit that I was afraid he had. I also began to see that Geoffrey's education in natural history was to be distinctly a thing outside my province. Blood-suckers and Dobsons, frogs'-eggs, rats with the help of his dog, and even an occasional eel — I was by no means broken-hearted when the rage for electricity struck my son and he turned from salamanders to sal-ammoniac and wet batteries.

The girls' investigations were more along my own line. They did not always share each other's tastes, but they kept well within the range of mine. Barbara, for instance, passed through a phase of interest in geology, and went about for some time with hammer and text-book collecting specimens. That fad was short-lived. Margaret, who is ordinarily a respecter of other people's property, used Barbara's specimens of ferruginous quartz one night, to throw at cats. Barbara took this bereavement philosophically, not even troubling herself to collect her specimens from the vicinity of the neighboring fence.

She did, however, redouble her efforts to discourage Margaret's craze for mushrooms. Threats of mushroom

poisoning, she knew, had no effect whatever. Margaret was accustomed to take high ground on that subject and to explain that she was not afraid of death, as such. In the face of every protest, she went on collecting inky-caps and field-mushrooms, frying them in butter, and consuming them on toast — until Barbara's insight hit upon the weak place in her sister's defenses.

"If you knew how *affected* you seem when you do it — " observed Barbara, and sighed hopelessly. The trick was done. No more shaggy-manes, no more puff-balls. Margaret was permanently cured.

It was long after the children had put away their flower-books and bird-lists and had fully grown up,

that Barbara had a belated attack of collecting butterflies. She was ashamed to spend the money that would be necessary to buy a regulation butterfly-net, and therefore looked about for material to make one. In a dark corner of the tool-house she found Geoffrey's old-time turtle net, with its long heavy pole and stout iron hoop and twine netting. A clumsy thing indeed, but effective. She replaced the ragged dip-net with a new one made of mosquito-gauze, and went out to ensnare her specimens. Geoffrey and Margaret could not contain their scorn. Barbara had made her net very long and slender, because her supply of mosquito-netting was not quite wide enough in proportion to

its length. The consequent shape of the net reminded Geoffrey of the Christmas-tree stockings made of similar material and filled with candy at kindergarten celebrations. He stole the net, and with Margaret's help filled it with an appropriate selection of gifts: an orange in the toe, a little old square copy of Paradise Lost, a Kewpie, a fish-horn, a wide pink hair-ribbon, and a pencil-box. He added an affectionate inscription, and hung the offering, landing-pole and all, at Barbara's place at table. The recipient was unmoved. She said that they had better be careful not to stretch her net. She assured them that a new one would cost them fifteen dollars.

And so the family training in

nature-study closed as it began, with butterflies and moths. Every spring now when I sort the contents of the attic, I look at the old herbarium and bird-records and the butterfly collection, and wonder how long I ought to keep them. The children have not gone on to be botanists or entomologists, and I suppose that pretty soon I shall throw away the relics of their early enthusiasms. It is just as well. It is mainly for memories that we prize our old pursuits. It is worth our while simply to have learned some of the lovely names that our race has found for the little things of the woods and sky. Margaret may have been routed from her mushrooms, but at least the whole family had heard several times the names of the Fairy

Ring, the Little Gray Nuns, and the Angel of Death. Barbara's geological specimens went flying out into the night, but we shall not forget her rose-quartz nor her specimens of shale and pudding-stone. Things in the fields and swamps have now the power of awakening instant associations with us all. The reddening of the swamp-maple, the song of the meadow-lark, the pink flutter of arethusa in the marshes, the cool wetness of pond-lily stems, — every one knows how these can stir the spirit. I wish that there were time to know such things completely. But even the slightest knowledge of them enriches the family tradition.

Some time ago an old friend of Endicott's was visiting us. He has

lived an absorbing life in his profession, but he has also kept up his interest in a youthful hobby for collecting rare stones and fossil-remains. He had heard that there was a rich hunting-ground for such things in a region near our town. One afternoon when Endicott was busy I took our guest for a ride and we made an exploration of the recommended field. At the foot of the ledges were the very things we came for, and we sat down on the stone wall to examine the discovery and to exult. I glanced at the face of the old gentleman beside me. It was aglow with the flush of triumph and delight. He had thrown his hat on the ground, and the keen wind of late autumn stirred his white hair. He was explaining the perfect

points of the specimens with all the eagerness of an intent mind. As we started back to the carriage, my glance strayed just beyond the drifts of red leaves on the ground beside the wall. There was a patch of blue in the corner by the bars. Fringed gentians. Dozens of them. With our fragment of rock and a spray of fringed gentians we rode home, still exchanging congratulations. Our afternoon had been a success.

I think that there was something quite genuine in our cordial response to each other's enthusiasm that afternoon. Any interest which retains permanently the power to charm and freshen the imagination brings us moments of keen excitement which add to the normal quota of our sym-

pathies and our experience. The zest, the fresh delight, and the eagerness are never trivial, whether the object that arouses them is a fossil, a turtle, or a Cecropia Moth.

X

ENDICOTT AND I ECONOMIZE



HEN I see Endicott coming up the steps with an Edam cheese under one arm and a large bottle of olives under the other, I know that I have carried food-conservation far enough. In theory, our family is heartily in favor of plain living and high thinking, yet there are many admirable and inexpensive foods that they will not touch. A practical maiden aunt of mine suggests that I might starve them into it. Unfortunately my husband and son and daughters are people of independent resources, and if the diet that I provide does not

minister to delight as well as to digestion, all sorts of little donation parties ensue at once. My relatives begin to bring home things that they "saw in a window down-street." Endicott's favorite reaction seems to be olives and Edam cheese, but he has been known to vary that choice with hothouse tomatoes, or squabs, or a lobster of great price.

This complicates my plans. Not only in war-time but on general principles I am a thrifty soul. I know how to make left-overs into the most delicious ragouts and puddings in the world. But my family has an instinct for appraising food-values on a cash basis. The instinct is unconscious, for they all approve of thrift, but their appetites register none the less ac-

curately the difference between the costly and the humble dish.

"Why do you fuss with this Illustrated Cookery?" inquires Geoffrey when he finds on the table some left-over disguised as delicacy that reminds him of the pictured pages of my housekeeping magazines. "We'd just exactly as soon have plain things."

Endicott too prides himself upon being a man of simple tastes. What could be more unpretentious than a plain cut of Porterhouse steak, simply broiled? He really prefers this to the most elaborate "made dish." When it comes to oysters, he urges me not to give myself the trouble of concocting anything as elaborate as a stew. He is perfectly satisfied with Bluepoints in their shells comfortably roasted over

the coals in the fireplace, quite in a plain, old-fashioned way. In fact, Endicott expects that something plain and old-fashioned is going to be provided for him whenever the rest of us have illustrated cookery for dinner.

Once I was sure that I had struck a combination of cannelon of beef and tomato sauce that every one would like. Endicott carefully served us all, and then, with his carving-knife and fork at parade rest, he inquired, "And what is Papa going to eat?" I explained that the elaborate dish before him was a very inexpensive preparation of round steak; and he partook of it tolerantly with the air of a man who must uphold national issues. But later he telephoned to say that there was a man to see him on busi-

ness and he would n't come up to supper. He would get a bite down-street. The only bite that Endicott sees fit to get down-street costs a dollar a plate. When he begins to talk to the children about the pleasures of "gathering around the frugal board," I know that it is about time for him to be gathering about a board that is not quite so frugal, and I hastily stop retrenching.

To tell the truth, when I try to reduce our table expenses I have a sensation of stalking my family. This is nervous work, and I have often suggested that we might do better to economize in some direction where the rest of the household could take more responsibility.

Endicott and Geoffrey are per-

fectly reasonable about this. They decided to dispense with the furnace-man altogether one winter and attend to the heater themselves. As part of the fitting preparation, Endicott bought a great sprinkling-can with which to water the ashes to keep them from flying when he emptied them. He bought a large pair of gloves with gauntlets for his cuffs, and established a nail for them over the boiler. He also bought a new low chair to sit in, so as to get the proper leverage upon the ash-pan. Then followed a remodeling of the top of the chimney to improve the draught; a new scientific form of shaker; and daily disparaging utterances about our heating-plant.

Geoffrey and his father agreed per-

fectly about the heater. They named it Flossie, and arranged various patented devices with alarm-clocks attached, which were intended to regulate Flossie's early morning activities. They would have been willing, I think, to let her run entirely by alarm-clocks, but they have failed as yet to find one that will shovel on the coal. They had to content themselves with reducing the coal to a system. Twice a day, they said, was enough to feed her, and I was implored not to intervene.

Now an old family furnace does not take kindly to systems, and Flossie has always had her little ways. I got into the habit of going surreptitiously to the cellar myself now and then, to shake her down and coddle

her a bit. I was not allowed to do this when my family was in the house. They drew the line at my shoveling coal. I love to stoke, and it goes against all my finer instincts to stir up contented men from their newspapers and send them down to dark cellars where they hate to go. But let me rattle the subterranean coal-shovel never so softly, and I have both Endicott and Geoffrey roaring at my heels. They consider it a reflection on them when I do it. With infinite patience they divest me of my shovel, and explain over and over again their famous system. All winter they ran the heater, and all winter I carried on my clandestine activities in the cellar. As time went on, Flossie and I began rather to miss

the furnace-man, but we tried to console ourselves with the thought of the elegant new equipment we had acquired.

In the spring, it seemed, Endicott was planning to continue his rôle of Handy Man About the House. Late one busy afternoon, I found him preparing to put on the screens. He usually sends up his office-janitor to do this, but your true thrifter does not pay janitors to do things that can be done as well by home talent. It is no child's play to put on our screens, but Endicott went about it with a high heart.

Probably every house in the world except ours has uniform windows and uniform screens, so that all the screens fit all the windows, no mat-

ter how you pair them off. Ours are not like that. No two of our windows are equiangular nor equilateral, and our screens are made in assorted shapes and sizes according to the windows that they respectively fit. Consequently, they fit no way except respectively. We have bent squares and rhomboids, trapezoids and trapezia; and woe to the man that tries to put an oblong screen into a bent hole. I have marked the screens and the window-ledges with a neat code of my own, so that I know at a glance where each should go, and by dint of annual supervision I have taught my code to Endicott's janitor. But it had never occurred to me to instruct Endicott. He is not commonly given to furbishing up the premises.

He went about busily, however, trying a screen here and a screen there, rattling them, reversing them, turning them upside down, and finally fastening each securely into the window which it seemed most approximately to fit. My advice was not asked, nor offered. When Endicott takes to sloyd work I have learned to subside. I have no doubt that connubial murders have been committed with a screw-driver. I was therefore prudently absorbed in various neutral occupations in the sewing-room when Endicott appeared at the window with a screen in one hand and a roll of screen-cloth in the other.

"I have tried this screen in all the windows," said Endicott, looking at

it with some distaste, "and it does n't fit anything, any side up or either side out. That makes me short one screen. The rest are all on. Do you mind if I use screen-cloth for this window?"

I expressed approval, and minded my own business more feverishly than ever while he unrolled his square of screen-cloth and produced his box of tacks.

"Would you mind shutting the window?" asked Endicott regretfully, after some moments of measuring and pounding. "I shall have to nail the bottom of this screen-cloth to the lower part of the window-sash itself. It turns out to be a little scant."

"But if you nail it to the sash," I ventured, "how can we open the window?"

Endicott considered, resourcefully.

"We don't really *have* to open this window, do we?" he inquired. "We could use the other always and keep this one shut."

"Then," said I, as mildly as possible, "if we are n't going to open the window why do we need a screen at all?"

When a beautiful truth dawns upon Endicott, he acts on it at once. He genially pried out his tacks, rolled up his screen-cloth, and telephoned to his janitor to come up and measure us for a new screen. Proper screening, Endicott remarked as he and the janitor installed the new one, is the truest economy.

About the pear-tree I was not such a model of wifely tact. There

was a drooping limb on one of our trees overhanging the sidewalk in front of our house. This lowest branch had a habit of involving itself with people's umbrellas on rainy days. It caught the top of the umbrella and jerked it back against the passing hat, spattering down showers of rain-water on the upturned face in the most exasperating way. It is annoying to stub your toe, but it is far more annoying to stub your unbrella. For some time we had been going to have that branch removed, and now Endicott decided that he himself would do it in a trice.

I came home one afternoon to find the thing accomplished. That bough would never again ensnare umbrellas, but the operation had been oddly per-

formed. Endicott had cut off the branch at a narrow place just before the twigs and leaves began, and had left an awkward eighteen-inch length of the pear-tree limb which thrust itself out at right angles with the trunk, like a semaphore. The relieved passersby could afford to be jocose. They said that it looked like the spout of a tea-pot. Workmen oiling the road hung their coats and dinner-pails upon it. A hook so conveniently placed is surely not meant to be ignored by an appreciative public. Endicott insisted that people would soon get used to it, but I knew that I never could. I called up my favorite workman and engaged him to saw off our famous land-mark nearer to the trunk. There are times when the

simple laboring man has a warm place in my regard.

After a good deal of this kind of thing had gone on, Endicott and I were discussing our results. We saw that when we economized on service we usually laid out more on new tools and experiments than we saved by doing the work. The example might be good for others and the spirit noble, but the difference in our cash-account was negligible. I suggested that we might look over the budget once more to see what personal expenditures might be cut down entirely.

"If Mother 's going to cut anything, it ought to be agents," said Barbara with feeling. "She does n't know how to cut 'em. They come around sell-

ing brushes to go through college. She says that they are just about Geoffrey's age." Barbara glanced at Geoffrey with a sardonic and sisterly eye. "She bought some more brushes just yesterday."

"It was n't exactly a *brush*," I protested. "It was a very good little knife-sharpener that you turn with a crank."

"Yes," continued Barbara unfeelingly; "and last week there was a handy can-opener that would n't open anything after the man had gone. But mostly it 's brushes. Radiator brushes, stove brushes, gas-pipe brushes. All kinds."

Barbara seated herself at the piano and began to play, partly to cover my embarrassment, and partly to ob-

scure any argument that I might have made. But I am perfectly willing to admit a weakness when I have one. I know that I ought not to let my impulses as a hostess and a parent run away with my funds. But it is true that an enterprising young agent finds me tame quarry. When I can, I try to leave such parleys to Barbara.

It is she, if any one, who finds out about Endicott's extravagances in new books. That is the thing that Endicott cannot help buying. He sees them advertised in irresistible book-reviews and dealers' notices. He glimpses their tantalizing pages lying open in the windows of the publishers. Every so often he casts aside all restraint, goes into a brain-storm, and buys books of all kinds. He

gathers them in by the armful, in sets, in five-foot shelves. His method after one of these rash purchasing-bees is to keep the new books quietly at the office, just as new wine is set away for a time, to age. When the bindings have grown sufficiently old and useful-looking, he brings up the volumes one at a time quite casually to the house. If any one asks questions he replies easily, "That? That 's a book that I bought once in Boston. As I remember it, it was pretty good." An old-time purchase like that never sounds extravagant. A book that has become blended with its owner's past does not seem exactly like a purchase at all. It is a part of one's growth, and dollars and cents have nothing to do with it.

If I could only conceal my brushes and can-openers until they too could grow old and weather-beaten with hard use! But Barbara knows all the places where I keep brushes.

Sometimes when the children are away, Endicott and I confer with real seriousness upon this question of thrift. We reluctantly admit that the amassing of funds is not our strong point. We can economize on some things, but not on others. I know that I shall save something on to-morrow's frugal board; but I also know that I shall spend it presently on violin strings and camera plates. It seems to go that way. We make resolutions, and manage ingeniously, and we save. Then we have impulses and appeals and accidents, and we spend.

The more complex the family interests, the harder it is to balance the savings and the extravagances. We have never, for instance, had any kind of phonograph. The money saved from this, we felt we could devote with a clear conscience to the musical training of the children. Not an elaborate training, but courses of lessons on different instruments, just enough so that we might form a family orchestra. We have the orchestra, but we have not noticed that the money saved on phonograph records has made us very rich. We also hardened our hearts against automobiles and motor-boats and the delights of travel. It would not hurt the children to do without non-essential matters. Just a college course

for each of them and a bit of vocational training before they went — we believed in bringing up the family very simply. Yet for all its simplicity, we have not found it a money-saving device.

"Of course," says Endicott, after a few moments of this earnest talk, "I would n't give up some of the things that we have enjoyed for a good many stocks and bonds. We might have managed those too if we had been gifted that way, but as it is we have the things we wanted most. Still — we must see that the children do not repeat our mistakes."

Endicott pauses reflectively.

"In fact it 's high time now," says Endicott, "that we began to save."

XI

DAR'ST THOU, CASSIUS



HERE are people who cannot whistle; people who cannot distinguish red from green; people who cannot carry a tune. These limitations we accept as facts, recognizing reasonable demonstration. But about certain other limitations, men are incurably sanguine. I, for instance, cannot learn to swim. For years I have been called upon to demonstrate this incapacity to a curious and skeptical seaside public. But no matter how thorough my demonstrations, people will not grasp the fact that I constitutionally cannot swim. They

assume that I am learning. The incompetent person trying to swim is never regarded as a defective: he is regarded as a beginner. The optimistic salt-water mind is incapable of absorbing tragedy. It cannot accept the fact that a being may appear once or twice in history who is unable to begin. I cannot begin to swim, and the person whom I have tried the hardest to convince of this final fact is my son Geoffrey, a youth of heavy hand and towering ambitions, whose will to power is weakened by no base alloy of pity.

He suddenly decided one summer that it was a family oversight not to have brought me to the swimming point. I must learn at once.

I should explain without further

delay that I am in my element in the salt water, if left to myself. I am not like Endicott, who snatches the hour of rare calm at the cottage for his newspaper and the hammock. Nor am I like Margaret, who spends the bathing-hour sitting high upon the beach, fully clad in muslin, acting as curator of wrist-watches, bath-house keys, and children's water-wings. My natural method in the salt water is to rest my finger-tips on the white sand of the ocean-bed, where the water is not quite two cubits deep, and thus to lie at ease in the rocking brine, drifting gently inshore with the waves. The sun makes wavering lights in the shallow water; the pebbly sand runs in and out through my fingers; and if a more generous billow

than usual washes me too far inland, I can back lazily out on my finger-tips again until I reach the ideal depth once more, where the shelving sand is exactly at arm's length from the surface. Anchored in this way, I am not emulous of my sea-going friends; I am too contented.

The exacting Geoffrey, however, cannot countenance my methods. He trusts that I will admit the fact that I cannot learn to swim in two feet of water. He gives me fair warning early in the day that he will teach me to swim at eleven. At half-past ten he leads me to the door of the bath-house and bids me make ready.

When I know that a swimming-lesson is in store, my outlook upon the ocean undergoes a chilling change.

A typical morning of water-sport goes somewhat like this: Tricked out in black suit and gay cap, I cower behind the bath-house door, dreading my début. Through the crescent-shaped window that looks out upon the sand I can see my daughter Barbara swinging down through the beach-grass with a thoughtless confidence that is now my envy. With one tragic eye glued to the crescent moon, I watch her as she dives lightly from the pier, and I listen as Geoffrey roars to her to race him to the raft. I wait until all the family and all the friends of the family are well under water. At last, when further delay would mean a search party, I emerge from my sandy cell. I start off down the board walk, trying to advance to

my fate with assurance, watching a distant sail. But I cannot help quailing at that which is to come.

I think that I could endure it all better if I could for once go into the deep water unattended. But no. The crowd hails me with cordial cries. A dutiful son comes striding out through the surf to meet me, dripping arms outstretched. The touch of a water-soaked sea-monster is a horror to the flesh. I evade the clammy arms hysterically, and throw myself desperately into the sea. Then, standing rigidly up to my neck in freezing brine, I turn one fearful eye upon my approaching tutor. With such a glance, a mink in a trap observes the approaching canoe of the hunter; you may see the same bright look of

questioning terror in the eyes of a wild kitten cornered in a loft.

Geoffrey is not sensitive to dramatic atmosphere. Purposefully he approaches, threshing the surface as he comes.

I shall not attempt to describe all that happens next. I cannot answer for the subtleties of teaching a non-teachable, non-aquatic animal to swim. But to any incredulous critic who suggests that I have not been trained by the proper method, I reply: I have been trained by all the methods. There is no device given under heaven among men that has not been tried upon me. Consultations have been held over me. Experts have been called in from distant parts to look me over. Possibly not all the devices

were tried quite long enough, but that was not the fault of my tutor. My case is still to him a tantalizing problem, complex in technicalities, and because insoluble fascinating. I can see him now in my uneasy dreams as he pauses for a moment, balancing me on one careful hand, while he reflects upon the details of his next experiment.

I try to help him all I can. I follow orders with touching intelligence, writhing along upon the water in all the prescribed angles. But one thing I cannot control. I cannot help sinking. Out of my great love for my trainer I have learned to sink without struggling. I can go down with perfect repose of manner, like a sinking star.

Geoffrey will never understand this. "Have a little confidence," he implores, "and you *can't* sink."

Obediently I have confidence. My soul rises to confidence, as an oriental worshiper lifts his heart in spiritual sublimity before his hopeless gods. Yet with all my confidence thick upon me, I sink; sink with the moderation and firmness of a submarine submerging with all on board. I sink convulsively; not head-first, not feet-first, but horizontally and as a whole.

It seems that I am not to be permitted to drown. Just as I am beginning to grow resigned to the calmness of the lower deeps, I am fished up again, and arranged carefully once more upon the waves, like a needle

on the surface of a glass of water, and bidden yet another time to "Strike out."

Strike out! Oh, attitudes most orthodox and frog-like! I have learned to strike them all. Not, however, upon the surface. The great combers close over me, and I go down; then rhythmically I am drawn back to the surface again by loving hands, my dizzy brain repeating faintly a lovely line of poetry with new meaning:

"From the great deep to the great deep she goes."

The very cadence is soothing.

This is the way it always happens —not one time nor twenty times, nor ninety-nine times out of a hundred, but always. It always will happen this way, because I cannot swim.

Yet Geoffrey is blind to proof. He still believes that it is some omission of his that keeps me helpless. No doubt when he comes back from across the water, he will want to try new methods, learned perhaps from Turks.

At all events, no swimming-hour goes by without a new variation of technique, guaranteed by friends. At times I question the value of a wide circle of acquaintance, technical and ingenious. Too drugged by sea-water by this time to suffer much, however, I struggle on, only mind enough left to wonder what great faith supports this excellent son of mine that he should spend the entire bathing-hour alternately launching me and dredging for me with the

morose persistence of a secretary of the navy.

Usually, just as the last glimmer of human intelligence is about to be drowned out, my respite comes. Barbara, surging along from her revels by the raft, comes paddling by: "Make her go in," she advises my master. "She ought not to overdo when she is just learning. Hi! Hurry! Fish her up! Now make her go in."

Make her go in! With an ironic cackle I laugh terribly between chattering teeth, and wade out, stiffly flapping.

In "The Egoist," George Meredith in an admiring mood describes Clara Middleton's graceful way of walking from the garden to the house as "swimming" across the grassy lawn.

Meredith has been criticized for this figure of speech. Many readers condemn it as far-fetched and artificial. But I support Meredith. If one must swim, the best place for it, in my opinion, is the lawn.

XII

BARBARA DEVELOPS THE LAND



NDICOTT and I have an admiration for well-kept grounds and orderly premises. Therefore, our consciences used to trouble us as we considered the looks of our estate when the children were small. We ran, in those days, an amateur playground in our back yard; sand-piles and potato-bakes, croquet wickets and a tennis set, a hop-scotch field and a house for the bandit Geoffrey. Our back yard was small, and these things filled it full. These furnishings, moreover, were not all of the strictly ornamental type. No landscape gardener had

been consulted as to their placement, and the "values" were by no means according to his art. Geoffrey's little house, for instance, was made from a large piano box, clapboarded and shingled, the interior furnished and inhabited by his roistering gang of followers. Where we should have had a "velvet lawn," the boys had sunk old tubs in the ground as often as they felt the need of a new turtle-tank; and up and down within these ponds sailed scores of stately turtles with inquiring necks thrust forth. There was no room to keep a garden. Relics of our former flower-beds struggled here and there — a flowering almond bush by the fence-corner, a vine-like growth known as perennial pea, which miraculously reappeared every spring,

striped grass beneath the plum-trees, and a row of grapevines by the wall, these last immensely encouraged by the boys. This was about all, except the apple tree, laden with Baldwins and acrobats each fall. In fact, our back yard was not one of the sightly spots of town.

Then Geoffrey, outgrowing turtles and his little house, moved upward to his attic work-room. The gang, busy there with print-shop and wireless, climbed the garret stairs instead of the apple tree, and left the yard deserted. The garden rested quietly in the sun.

Here, logically, might have been our chance to reassert our suspended plans for a picturesque and fruitful plot of ground. Endicott, however,

is no born tiller of the soil, and I had other rows to hoe.

Barbara, at this point, announced that she was going to have a garden. She said it in that decided tone in which Saint Simeon Stylites told his friends that he was going to have a pillar. This tone, from Barbara, means persistence through mockings and scourgings. The mockings are the specialty of her brother Geoffrey.

"It's too bad," said she, "to have that ground running to waste, with nothing growing on it to amount to anything."

"There's the Perennial Pea," said Geoffrey hopefully.

"That," said Barbara firmly, "is never going to come up again."

Barbara is business-like and inde-

pendent. She believes in consulting experts before she makes her plans. That afternoon she went alone to her grandfather's, hunted up his workman who was busy about the early gardening, and consulted him.

"You can't expect to have no such garden as this," Andrews told her. "This land of your grandpa's has had something put *on* it for years and years. You can't have a good garden without you put something *on* it."

Barbara decided that her garden should have something on it, and inquired what.

In the season that followed we saw her transformed before our eyes. From a cheerful ornament to the household and a talented adjunct to our various exploits, she became pre-

occupied, her conversation smacking strongly of the soil. Instead of going up to call on her grandmother, she went up to see Andrews. She hob-nobbed sociably with the butter-man, exchanging with him anecdotes about transplantings and cut-worms. The word "cut-worms," we learned, is the pass-word and countersign among gardeners. Barbara spent confidential moments at the door with a certain kindly and dejected Mr. Pollard who raises vegetables and mingled her tears with his as he recounted the depredations of the cut-worms — these subterrenes.

"Ten rod of radishes," sighed Mr. Pollard, "and all but two rod cut clean off!"

"When do they turn into butter-

flies," asked Barbara, "and stop cutting?"

"They don't never stop," said Mr. Pollard morosely. "They keep right on a-cuttin'."

The vegetable garden, however, was not Barbara's most intimate concern. Her most thoughtful planning was devoted to the flowers. She had a feeling that a garden as small as hers should not be too flat. The plants should hold their blossoms rather high. She knew the flowers that she wanted, most of them hardy perennials, blooming the second year. That first spring she spent her time transplanting frail wisps of green, setting out the seedlings in careful groups, and later weeding plump rosettes of flowerless green plants

through the summer. Snapdragons, digitalis, hollyhocks, and delphinium — all these were only one sober mass of green.

She did not tell us her trials. We could not help knowng it when a row of hopeful shoots that she had just transplanted for the second time burst into bloom, producing the unmistakable fine flower of chickweed. Barbara explained that in the cotyledon stage she had thought that it was something else, more rare and generally sought after, that evidently had never come up at all. She called our attention to the fact that it was uncommonly thrifty chickweed.

She did consult the family about her pink sunflowers. "They bloom right away," she began, "and will

make a rapid effect this first year. They are of dwarfish growth, and the petals are creamy white, with rose-color around the edges. You can cut them and they blossom all the more. 'Cut and come again,' the catalogue says."

We advised pink sunflowers, by all means. How they grew! "A rapid effect" was a conservative phrase. They grew into great angular stalks, with rank towers of rough green leaves, where swarms of grasshoppers sprang explosively out upon the passer-by. The first enormous bud appeared, fat and round and hard. We watched with suspense for the pink sunflower to unroll its rays of rose and cream-color, as advertised. "*La tulipe noire,*" Geoffrey called it.

And one morning when we looked out it was open. Its perfidious heart lay flat to view, and every sturdy petal was bright yellow, the yellow of a healthy pumpkin on a sunny day.

"Just exactly like the sunflowers around Mr. Pollard's chicken-yard," remarked Barbara cheerfully. "Only larger."

At that same time, the hollyhocks were weighing heavily on their owner's mind. Three dozen beautiful plants out by the fence were attacked by hollyhock rust, and were curling up their leaves to die. Barbara went at once to Geoffrey.

"You have to spray my hollyhocks with whale-oil soap," announced Barbara politely.

"Why?" asked Geoffrey. The most

casual reference to whale-oil soap makes Geoffrey's social manner a bit stilted. His tone now was chilly.

"Because I can't work the spray," explained Barbara.

"I 'll *show* you!" Geoffrey started hopefully for the tool-house.

"No." Barbara was calm but resolute. "I'll melt the whale-oil so —"

"Look here," began Geoffrey reasonably. "You don't know what it means to spray the under side of those leaves. You have to go at it upside down, and the stuff gets all over you. Your little old hollyhocks will live just as well without whale-oil soap as with. What do you care?"

But Geoffrey went forth with the sprayer, and sprayed. Whale-oil soap, he said, went a long way. He was

confident that there would never be any hollyhock rust on him.

A varied life for Barbara began with that year. Now that the garden is a family institution, it seems odd to reflect on the experimental season when the roses and radishes were her chief consolation. For the garden is a pleasure now. The flowers are tall and graceful, well above the ground. Spires of giant larkspur, deep blue and light blue and lavender, rise just beyond the pointed stalks of white foxglove, gleaming against the shadows. Lofty Japan lilies grow along the path, and hollyhocks beside the wall. It is hard to suggest in words the effect of those straight, thin lines of bloom rising all over the garden. The beauty of the flowers seems to be

starting upward in slender shafts of color, from the green below. It is best after a late shower, when it stands in the low sunlight. Against the cool wetness of the leaves lie the shadows of the flower-spires, and the clear tones of blue and ivory in the blossoms content the eye.

Endicott and I stood watching it late one afternoon, as the children went out to tie up the bent stalks after a summer storm. It was a picture that we like to remember — the girls, with Geoffrey sauntering in their wake, moving in and out among the tallest flowers. That garden is almost like the visible rising of a dream. It means that the children have grown up, to meet us on the lines of our own planning. I love the

flowers for that. And yet sometimes I give a swift, affectionate thought to that old-time scene — the sand-piles, the little house, the snapping turtle pacing up and down on guard, and by the fence, the hardy flowering almond bush, the striped grass, and the Perennial Pea!

XIII

DRIFTWOOD FIRE



HAVE in my cellar a barrel of driftwood, planks of old whaling brigs with the copper nails still bristling here and there. Every winter Endicott orders me just such a barrel, sometimes from Montauk, sometimes from New Bedford, where the old schooners are broken up. This is in memory of one evening years ago on our wedding trip when the uncertain wheels of the Montauk stage drew up at the door of Conklin's-by-the-Sea, and we went in from the rain. There, in the farm kitchen, we

found our first driftwood fire burning blue and lavender on the hearth.

Ever since, our wood-basket has had hidden under the logs of maple and hickory a stick or two of the battered old whalers. This has become a family tradition. The children used to make witch-fires of the wood on Hallowe'en. Planks of it went to college on the floors of their trunks. And now, when they are all away and have barrels of their own, Endicott invites guests for the winter evening, and still gets me my driftwood.

This is about all Endicott does do in the matter for he does not like to chop. The planks are too large for economical burning, and really need to be split. This must, moreover, be done with some skill, without flaking

off the strange green substance that cakes their surface, and without wasting a single nail-hole. I can therefore have no unlettered man of toil chopping my whalers for hire. Therefore, since I find the professional classes loth to chop, I descend to my barrel, pry out a plank, and split the worn old sticks myself. With my little pile of odd-shaped fagots in hand, I ascend to my wood-basket, and wait for a good night for a fire, with guests.

Guests, we have found, always behave better at their second driftwood fire than at their first. If driftwood is mentioned to the human race, the human race invariably mentions driftwood powder. At least, no guest of ours, but one, has ever failed to discuss it, its ingredients, and the

shops where it may be had. Endicott at such times plays the perfect host. He evinces cordial interest, explaining in turn how the copper nails and copper sheathing of these ancient brigs, acted upon by the chemicals in sea-water, produce a similar compound. In fact, for some guests, Endicott maintains, the powder would be best. A tablespoonful sown over the fire — and lo! the instant, sure result, continuing as long as one cares to keep on basting the logs with it. The powder has its advantage; at least its possibilities furnish talk in the first few minutes after the true driftwood has been laid on the embers.

As the mouldy old sticks kindle slowly with ordinary yellow flame, I

am always uneasy. I can feel the guest deciding that the much-talked-of colors are all imagination. I recall the dreadful evening when driftwood did refuse to burn colors, — a plank that I myself had collected by the shore and brought home in my steamer trunk. I was having an experimental fire by myself with a piece of it one evening when Endicott walked in.

"Burning the ship?" asked Endicott cordially.

"I don't believe it 's exactly a *ship*," I explained modestly. "It looked like the end of an old dory."

"It *acts* like the end of an old shed," said Endicott.

This conversation runs in my head whenever driftwood burns yellow.

And then, in the midst of such

uncomfortable reflections, up flare the waves of green and saffron-green and blue. Little points of clear color flicker at every crevice, and conversation dies.

I do not know what we all think about as we watch it. Perhaps it is not necessary to muse on lost ships and storms and broken ventures, nor on all our drifted voyages apart. It is enough for once to see a rainbow in flames.

There is no monotony now. Rarer colors show as the heart of the wood begins to burn. Rich violet sometimes glows underneath, and a peculiar lilac color wavers over the burned-out fragments as the edges crumble. One stick falls, and a glory of turquoise and peacock-green

rushes up afresh. We watch it burn and change and flare, until at length it settles slowly into one last quiet flame of softest blue, with now and then a tiny red spark running over its surface, like a wild-goose-chase up a kobold's chimney flue. Rose-color in the embers; the last of the fire is the best. Then absolute dark, uncompromising as the death of a dream.

"Can you reach that bit of excelsior in the corner of the basket?" inquires Endicott of the guest. The obliging friend gropes efficiently in the dark.

"Now watch," remarks Endicott, and puts a handful of tinder on the dark little heap that was our fire.

What follows must some day go into somebody's collected poems. I

have mentioned our one guest who did not talk about driftwood powder. We first tried the experiment when he was here, and I have always thought that he would write the poem. For, as we watched, up through the common tinder rose once more the best of all the driftwood colors; the exquisite purity of blue and lilac, and the palest daffodil and green. We tossed fragments of birch and apple wood into the flame, and they burned as if they too had sailed the old North Sea with Sir Patrick Spens. Up from those soft dim ashes, into the commonplace material, came the rarest spirit of flame. We asked our guest what the poem should be about. He said that it meant for him the sadness of second love. He said

that it might be a symbol of sharing of inspiration. He said it was the beauty of a dead dream rising to bless a common life.

Endicott, with academic eyeglasses akimbo, watched the experiment genially. The poet dropped a twisted bit of a business letter into the ashes, and it flared into a wave of gold and violet.

"Perhaps it is the heat volatilizing the gases again," explained the poet dreamily.

"Exactly," said Endicott.

Yes. A quick little gust of wind down the chimney made the flame whirl softly. A gray flake of feathery ash floated out along the hearth. By what winds had it once been driven? By what old storms at night? I

brushed it back into the flame again; — strange ashes, curiously compounded of many things; of memories of Arctic reefs and dead men's bones, and going after whales.

XIV

HOW WILL YOU HAVE YOUR PAY?



HEN I go to have a cheque cashed at the bank and the paying-teller says, "How will you have it?" I usually ask for small bills. I do this for the convenience of the butter-man, the vegetable-man and the farmer who brings us chickens, but I have sometimes thought that the question and answer at the bank window are symbolic. "How will you have your pay?"

Whenever I hear young mothers complain that they simply have no time to keep up with anything, I am not impatient. I know that it is true.

The most devoted young home-maker in the average American family is sometimes shocked when she finds how large a proportion of her time must go into little monotonous tasks of plain manual labor with nothing to show for it. I am thinking of the typical educated young woman who glorifies her pretty home, employs a servant when she can get one, and clothes her children in neat little straight-cut garments which she has learned may be stout and plain but never dirty. How glibly one can pronounce that last specification, and how reasonable it sounds. The table-linen, also, may be simple to the point of severity but at least it must be spotless. At least! That is no light proviso when one infant in the family

is learning to hold a spoon in his uncertain fist, and when an older child is learning to cut up meat and cope with a baked potato. I confess that there were times in our own family history when if it had not been for Endicott's standards, a simple runner of spotless oilcloth would have decked our dinner-table. The civilized standards certainly do take thought and time.

The sort of young woman whom I have in mind wants to meet the civilized standard and meet it gracefully. She is ready to sacrifice outside interests to her home duties. She cannot, however, help feeling sorry when she finds that many of her cultivated talents are running down. She had intended to keep up her music, for

example, but she finds that her children instantly recognize the difference between the music she plays for them and the things that she practices in the line of scales and études. Childhood taste instinctively eschews the étude. Besides, she has not time enough for study without neglect of the hundred details that are waiting for her. I myself did manage to revive my piano practice one winter by allowing my small son to sit on the piano bench beside me and accompany me on a toy drum. With the steady roll of his drum-beats at my side we made quite a martial sound. One afternoon I turned suddenly from my exercises and began to play the "Moonlight Sonata." Geoffrey paused with lifted drum-sticks and

listened. Then he observed, "That's no piece to drum to," left me for a moment, and came clambering back beside me again, singing through a comb. The bust of Beethoven on the music-cabinet almost relaxed its frown.

With ingenuity and planning, I think, it is really possible for a busy housewife to cling to her music and share it with her children. Even if she does get out of practice, the remnants of her damaged accomplishments sometimes go as far toward mellowing life as the most finished concert performance. But the fact remains that for genuine creative progress in any art, the presence of domestic care is not a stimulus. No doubt it ought to be; Endicott has a good deal to say

about "angels in the kitchen." I know that the home-maker is engaged in the most divine and elemental occupation, and that her soul should put forth blossoms accordingly. But the modern kitchen is a place calculated to absorb the attention and the vitality of the most feathery angel imaginable. When it comes to literary work or independent scholarship of any sort, the efficient housekeeper must follow the example of Harriet Beecher Stowe and write upon the stove-pipe if at all.

It is as well to recognize the situation, not as it ought to be, perhaps, but as we find it. The woman who marries and makes a home to-day, unless she wants to dodge the issue

and shift her logical responsibilities to the hands of servants or relatives, must give up her mastery of the profession in which she was launched before marriage, and must learn half a dozen new and complicated arts. It is as if a man, at marriage, were expected to leave his desk or his engineering or his manufacturing plant, and take up the combined professions of janitor, grade-teacher, tailor, trained nurse, and chef, without drawing the salary of any one of them. Feminist Bolsheviki of every stripe have made much of this situation. It is at the root of modern theories about community kitchens, about the bringing up of children by the State, and about arrangements whereby the husband and wife go on

pursuing independent professions and meeting each other congenially at a restaurant for dinner at night.

In spite of this unrest, however, most of us will continue to find an essential beauty in family home-life closely knit and intimately shared. Most of us believe that a woman can afford to give up attainments in other arts for the sake of an intense and creative study of this central art of living. She must serve her ideal at the cost of many phases of her other potential talents, but so must any artist. It all depends on how important we think the home-associations of the race to be.

Suppose, then, that a woman accepts all the conditions squarely, sticks to her ideals, masters the de-

tails of domestic machinery, brings up her children, and finally launches them on lives of their own. How will she take her pay?

She cannot often take it in freedom from anxiety. One of her acquired talents is an acute feeling of responsibility. All her life long she has slept with one ear alert for the slightest sound. She is still wide-awake and vigilant. And she knows that in spite of her sensitive skill in adjusting the details of her children's lives hitherto, she is now powerless to govern a single event that may happen to them.

Every mother thought of this when the war was going on. What use had it been, this intricate work of building up and training young life, if a

single bomb in a flash of time could dash it to pieces without a trace? A destructive force accomplishes so much with such finality in an instant. A constructive force, in contrast, works against odds, works with infinite patience with treacherous elements on every hand, works at unlimited expense. It was sickening to belong to the constructive forces in war-time. And yet I have never been so fully convinced of the significance of ordinary family life as I was during the eighteen months when Geoffrey was in France. Suppose the entire fabric of our physical existence did go to atoms in an instant. Would not the structure of family experience outlast even that? What parts of our companionship were durable in the

face of long separation and broken plans?

Not only in war-time, but normally, every family life is subject to unforeseen disaster. Nine chances out of ten, the moment a careful mother has steered her course to the point where she might reasonably expect plain sailing, some unexpected cyclone comes up ahead and she has to rush about launching lifeboats in all directions. Her reward seldom comes in the form of "peace, perfect peace."

How, then, does she take her pay? I think that she usually takes it in frequent installments of small denomination. She finds it in the confidential remark of a little child, in a moment of pleasant companionship with her husband, in a conference

with a grown-up son or daughter when thought flashes across with the humorous illumination of old-time understanding; and most of all in her first-hand experience with the major facts of life.

This last is no small thing. We see the importance of contemporary living only in glimpses, but when we do catch sight of it clearly we never forget. My own most striking vision of the dignity of our modern type is a memory picture of my own father near the end of his long life. One of his youngest grandchildren was just a year old that day, and her mother had brought her over so that the grandfather might light the candle on her first birthday cake. There he sat against the shadows of the early

winter evening, holding the delighted baby on his knee. The clear flame of the one candle lit up the flushed cheeks and silky round head of the dark-eyed little baby, and deepened the splendid furrows in the face of the grandfather. It was a Rembrandt lighting, but not a Rembrandt face. Rembrandt's old men are tired; their nobility is that of weariness and the sheer duration of time. But the expression of the grandfather's face in the candle-light was not weary; it was attentive, whimsical, powerfully expressive of the poetry of the moment. I shall always keep that picture —the thoughtful old man and the exquisite little baby sitting together to watch the candle burn.

Perhaps it is always in the ad-

joining generations that we see the grandeur of the human type most clearly. We are more stirred by the very young and the very old than by people like ourselves. But we of the middle years can be assured that the mode of civilization which can produce old men of wisdom and vitality, and young men of purpose and endurance, is a phase of human history that is worthy of our steel. No matter what earthquake comes, we have known life. Nothing to show for it if the physical part of it goes to pieces? But we have had the honor and glory of touching it with a reverent hand.

Years ago, when I dropped into Endicott's office one afternoon, I saw a large glass paper-weight on a pile

of letters on his desk. The paperweight, I knew, was a relic of his bachelor days, and I picked it up with interest. It was the sort of contrivance made so that pictures and memoranda of all kinds could be inserted under the glass. I found that Endicott had stolen a photograph of mine and had put it in among the miscellaneous clippings and souvenirs that the generous frame contained. Directly under my picture I read this clipping from Emerson: "Look not mournfully into the past; it comes not back again: rightly improve the present: go forward into the future with a brave heart."

"Endicott," I began gently (this was in the early days when I still avoided the rôle of termagant wife) —

"Endicott, do you consider the inscription beneath my picture exactly appropriate?"

"What inscription?" asked Endicott, looking up from his desk. I handed him the paper-weight in silence.

"That?" said Endicott. "That does n't go with the picture. I put it in there years before I ever saw you."

But I was afraid that Endicott's business friends might misinterpret the tone of courageous resignation in the motto. I stole the paper-weight.

A while ago I came across it where I had hidden it in the corner of a big chest in the attic. The photograph was faded and the quotation from Emerson was turning yellow around the edges. After all, I thought, that motto might be worse. I took it

downstairs and made Endicott a present of it for his study-table.

That evening we sat and talked until late, about our home, and the war, and about how things would look to Geoffrey when he came back from France. We compared notes about the things he mentioned most frequently when he wrote of coming home: the Sunday morning breakfast, the fireplace, strawberry shortcake, the family conclave on the front stairs on the way to bed, our Saturday night peanuts, and — most tender association of all — the family water-pitcher. I told Endicott that I thought that one of the rewards of a mother's life was the pleasure of being associated with all these homely central things.

Endicott listened with interest and said, "That 's true about the mother's part in the family life, but where does the father come in?"

Then I assured Endicott that he could not possibly come in — for he is in already, in the very center of the family group, the charter member and founder of it all.

THE END

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